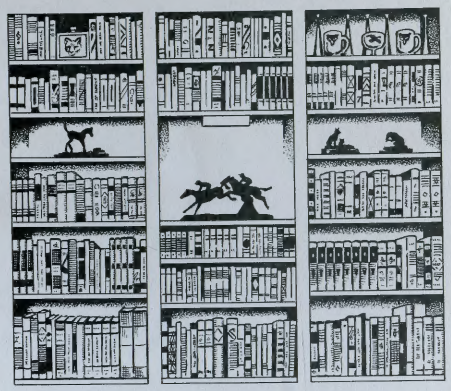

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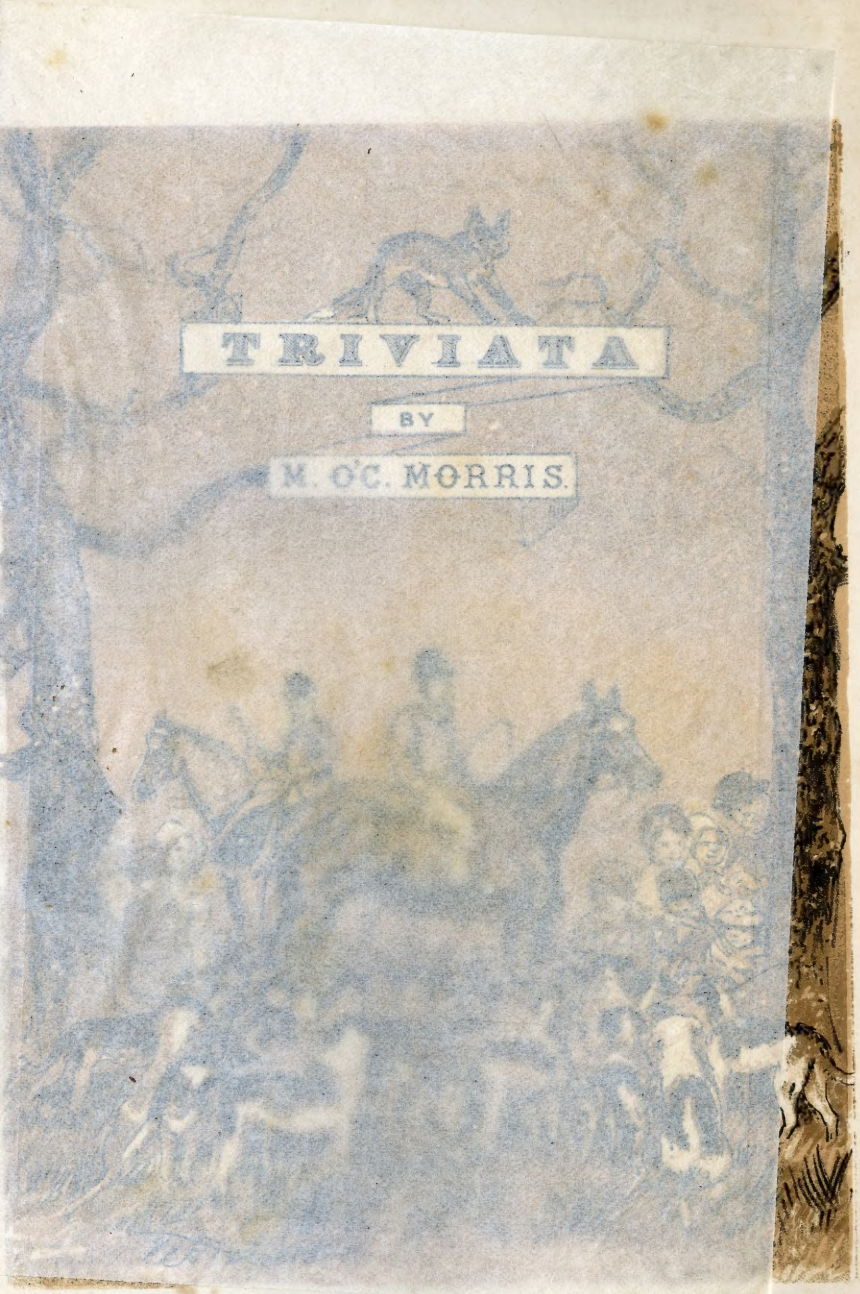

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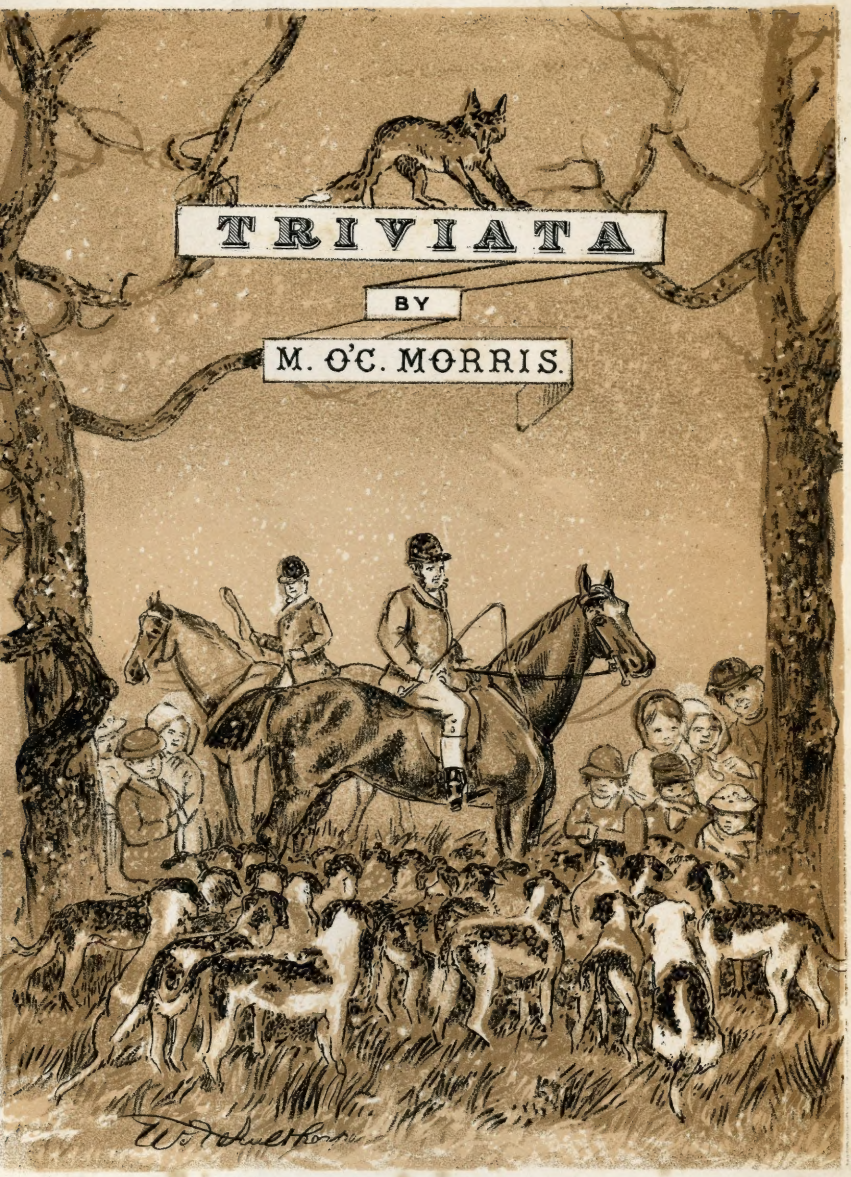

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TRIVIATA

OR

CROSSROAD CHRONICLES

OF

PASSAGES IN IRISH HUNTING HISTORY

DURING THE SEASON OF 1875-76

BY

M. O'CONNOR MORRIS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY
1877

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TO

THE EARL SPENCER,

WHOSE RAJ IN IRELAND,

STRAIGHT AND THOROUGH AS HIS RIDING,

ENDEARED HIM TO ALL CLASSES,

BUT MOST OF ALL TO THE LOVERS OF FOX-HUNTING,

I Dedicate

THIS FRAGMENTARY RECORD OF

LAST SEASON'S SPORT IN THAT ISLAND.

PREFACE.

NEWGATE has its calendar, war its chronicles; why should not war's image rejoice in a record of the triumphs and vicissitudes, the glories and disasters which attend it? and if the latter query be conceded, why should not its fairest theatre, its best arena, be sung by poet, illustrated by artist, or modestly "said" by the hebdomadal scribe who views the glass of fashion and the mould of form, in men, women, and horses, sweep by in all the glory and sheen of their war paint from his coign of vantage

where roads of the county do cross? But the scene is Ireland, quoth an objector, and of Ireland and the Irish we have eno' surely in the Session to satisfy the most fastidious in national grievance and warped sentiment, nor are the hierophants of Home-Rule, with their train of Sibyls and Cassandras, just now at their zenith of popularity. Very true; but, Hibernia venatica is about as different a country from Hibernia fanatica, or Hibernia politica, as is a halcyon summer sea to the Maëlstrom off Norway, or the seething heart of a Cyclone. In the two latter the ground-swells of stormy centuries still war sullenly against peace and repose; in the former the brotherhood of sport welds all ranks of the community into a happy and harmonious mass when the tongue of the Agitator ceases to trouble, and even the Politico-Polemico tribune is perforce at rest.

The most casual observer of the last few decades cannot fail to note the revolution which has taken place in Ireland, and which, day by day and year by year, is fulfilling its due cycle and appointed purpose.

The hunting "casual" knows that he is no longer in the atmosphere which Lever exaggerated into caricature, but of which he limned truly the more salient characteristics of fun, frolic, fighting, and reckless *insouciance* of the morrow. The buckeens and squireens of the hunting field are now an anachronism. The "Shau-

graun" element, with its slovenly accompaniments, exists only in memory. Irishmen, dispersed like the Hebrews over the face of the Globe, have poured back on the island of their love and affection many reflected rays of light and wisdom, while the invasion of the sordid stranger has metamorphosed the face of the country, and utterly changed the habits of the native Celts. And now may be traced throughout the land the keen money-making ingenuity of Yankeedom, the plodding and enlightened perseverance of the Northern Briton ever *propositi tenax*, and the frank business *bonhomie* and capacity of John Bull. Most conspicuous is this change in the national pastimes and pleasures. Hurling has given way to cricket everywhere, while hunting is conducted on the strictest English theory and practice, and its votaries (unlike the original settlers within the Pale) have become *anglis angliores* in observing all the canons of Venery and Woodcraft.

Heightened civilisation, nay, the introduction of the doctrines of free trade, which elsewhere have fought against hounds and hunting, have in Green Erin proved most ancillary to their development by the limitation of the plough and the encouragement of pasturage; while the rare railways only open out to the questing stranger avenues to fresh fields and pastures new.

Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked. Ireland grows

wealthy and wealthier and ravins for the excitement of her native and traditional heritage of field sports.

This little volume is a reprint of notes sent weekly to 'The Field' during last season, which as a matter of fact was in many places most unfriendly to hounds, but the writer thought that if, perhaps, the least lively and interesting of any he penned for that journal in previous winters, they were the *recentest*, and for that reason he offers them to the public. Most of the scenes depicted, passed under the writer's eyes; in many *pars parva fuit.* The remainder were supplied by kind hunting friends of the most practical and realistic turn of mind, who abhor the romance of the chase, and eschew such as, in the language of the Laureate, "Lie beside their nectar."

Things *obiter visa*, and almost *obiter dicta* must lack much polish of style and clearness of arrangement, and the writer can only plead in extenuation of these grave defects their general authenticity and exactness; and shorn as they have been occasionally by editorial scissors (when space demanded), he submits these chronicles as a fairly faithful record of the fluctuating tide of the chase in Ireland, in the writing of which he hopes and believes he has extenuated nothing faulty nor set down aught in malice.

As "realities of Irish life," he trusts they may attain

a niche in the temple of truth at least as high as those wonderfully sensational episodes presented to the British public occasionally by Celt-compelling Rareys.

Forsan et hæc olim meminisse juvabit.

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The fittest place for Tod to die
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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

For the Illustrations of these Hunting Chronicles I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. Walter Sculthorpe and Mr. Adrian Jones, of the Queen's Bays; and in justice to these amateur artists I may state that the accompanying sketches do not specially illustrate the scenes of the narrative, or pretend to give likenesses of the chief actors in the moving fox drama, but are rather pictures of incidents in hunting common more or less to all fields.

PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR.

FRONTISPIECE.

MR. DIDDLE DE WINK HAVING MET WITH SO MANY ACCIDENTS OUT HUNTING, HIS WIFE SENDS THE MONTHLY NURSE TO TAKE CARE OF HIM.

WHERE AM I? IS THIS GRAVESEND?

PLEASANT DAY. IN A BROOK. BOOTS FULL OF WATER, AND A SNOW-STORM.

"OH! SURE, YOUR HONOUR, I KNEW THIS WAS YOUR HORSE, WHEN THE GENT MOUNTED T'OTHER."

"JUMP UP, OLD FELLAR, I'VE CAUGHT 'KICKING SAL.'"

"CAN'T HOLD HIM. HERE I GO, IN OR OVER."

HUNTING SEASON OVER. NOW FOR A SUMMER'S REST.

HUNTING NOTES FROM IRELAND.

October 30th, 1875.

ἄρχετε βωκολίκας μῶσαι φίλαι ἄρχετ' ἄοιδας.

"JORROCKS LOCUTUS EST," and pleasantly and wisely has he told his hunting epics to spellbound *urbi et orbi*—epics from which the M.F.H. of many seasons may glean inspiration and delight; while the uninitated and unentered may find mirrored in his pages romances of real life as spirit-stirring as the pictures of Iroquois and Comanche braves with which Cooper and Mayne Reid delight uncensorious and uncritical youth, plus the *cachet* of possibility and probability, the lack of which must ever form a drawback to the most enthusiastic devourer of the latter episodes.

Jorrocks locutus est! and what single aphorism fixes itself more tenaciously in the memory than his oft-repeated apothegm that "hunting is the image of war"? Without pursuing the happy simile further, we may remark that, as war requires the most careful and elaborate preparation, rehearsals of parade, and an iteration of drilling and marching which may seem surplusage to the unenlightened, so does its image call for a preparation and study which only those behind the scenes can fully realise.

Uneasy is the head that wears a crown,

says the poet of all ages; but as the M.F.H. of the nineteenth

century existed not for the bard of Avon—no, not even in poetic or prophetic vision—we may hope to be pardoned for substituting a cap, the cap of office, for the symbolic crown, and the master of a subscription pack of foxhounds for the careworn king. The last meet is over. Peradventure he has been fortunate enough to give his season its crown and apotheosis by killing an old dog fox gallantly after five or six miles of pace which the gluttons thought good, the non-riders only moderate. Peradventure he has drawn a whole side of his territory blank, after the painful misadventure of chopping a gravid vixen early in the forenoon, while his ears have been assailed by the ignorant and *pococurante* remarks of careless pursuers, who think dog foxes can be found for them as easily as the Indian nabob found curricles for his guests—by ringing the bell—and who vow "they'll hunt no more in such a blessed slow country," and so on *ad libitum*.

The next day his real labours begin, if his heart be in the right place—*i.e.*, in his business. We will suppose that, a good premier himself, he has collected good heads of departments around him, and that a grateful country and prudent ancestors have prevented his being assailed by "that impecuniosity which vexes public men;" that Bridoon, the stud groom, will know how to repair the ravages of the season, cauterise the cripples, and find a pool of healing virtue in mercury and iodine for the halting and lame; that local committees relieve him from solicitation for prize poultry untimely slain, and lambs transferred from the sheepfold to the breeding earth. We will suppose his farmers loyal and true, zealous in the cause of sport, and not too critical about the injuries done to seeds and young wheat; while only a small percentage of the lords of the soil sacrifice the fox to the pheasant, and stimulate trapping and poisoning by a negative and illusory opposition. Still, let his staff of experts be never so effective, the *haute politique*, so to speak, of his country, and the ultimate appeal in every case, must remain in his hands, and his only. The geography of his country alone will fully

occupy his spare time. He should by rights know it as intimately as he does the bearings of his own park or demesne lands. No sewer, no burrow, no weird ruin where fox can harbour and baffle his pack, should escape his vigilance; while with every litter of cubs within his dominion he should have a sort of passing acquaintance—an unfamiliar familiarity. Add to these labours the task of breeding and increasing his hounds; the due mating of noble sires with noble dames—*ut coeat par jungaturque pari;* the education of the puppies returning from walk; the hardening of their feet by long summer exercise; the maintenance of coverts—and it will be seen at a glance that the M.F.H. is not one of the gentlemen of England who live at home at ease, while his brief holidays will be tinged with the hues of business and care, by intermittent visits to hound and horse shows, and inspection of neighbouring and rival kennels. So soon as the circumstances of his country will admit of it, he must be at work and commence that patient search and "vigil long of him who treasures up a wrong"—the long feud 'twixt hound and fox. Generally speaking, the latter weeks of August find him forsaking moor and forest for his woodlands, which he will invade at five o'clock in the morning, to catch the little modicum of scent which the earth then yields. Very silent and mysterious will be his outgoings and incomings then, for his pack will engross every instant of his attention; and of the few who are willing to hunt like our ancestors (*vide* the Vicar of Wakefield), at peep of dawn, only one or two will be let into the secret of his trysts. By the close of September he will know something more of his hounds; the corn will be harvested and housed; and small, select fields will enjoy with a bye-day keenness many a sharp scurry, in which some of the hard and dangerous riding over a blind country has not been unstimulated by

> The cider with a dash of gin which foams in the social can.

Descending from generals to particulars, we may here remark,

that, while in Ireland the necessity of cub-hunting is as universally recognised in theory as in England, practice by no means keeps pace with theory and logic. For this many causes combine; among which we may name, as the most operative, the paucity of woodlands and the lateness of the seasons. The secular forests of England, coeval with the Norman conquest, which form part and parcel of her history, find few counterparts, if any, in disforested Ireland, where the Megaceros hibernicus and the big wild wolf once found unmolested lairs. Rockingham and the New Forest exist not on this side of the Channel, and the readers of Froude's fascinating pages would find it no easy matter now—as they survey from a railway carriage the bleak, woodless, hedgerowless tracts—to believe that English capital and enterprise were extensively attracted to these western shores a hundred years ago by the fine facilities for smelting ore and furnace work which Irish forests then yielded. Reckless in their expenditure, the squires of those days cut down their oak woods like asparagus beds, and no trace of them is now apparent save in the Celtic nomenclature of many a townland. Their wiser and more provident successors have greatly increased the value of their waste lands by planting many thousand acres of hillside and moor; but these plantations occur principally in the non-hunting districts—in those *terris canibus negatis*, of which there is such a preponderating percentage in the island.

The second cause I have alluded to—namely, the comparative lateness of the season—is sufficiently attested by the different dates established by law for the festival of St. Partridge, the 1st of September in England, the 20th in Ireland; and perhaps a certain tardiness in their harvest preparations, and a want of system and organisation, rather add to this natural barrier. To these reasons we may add a third, namely, that since Ireland has become the stock farm and beef manufactory for her imperial sister, prudence and a chain of reflections assisted by high rents suggest the inexpediency of disturbing herds of fat beeves during

the warmer months, and thus impairing their digestion and value. On the other hand, if the hunting grounds of Ireland lack woodlands, they have compensations in huge tracts of moor and mountain, carpeted with the native low-spreading gorse and ling, which rides light and springy like the Porlock and Quantock dominions of the wild stag, where stout foxes abound to any extent, unless trapped by keeper or rabbit contractor. To such a wild country does Lord Fitzwilliam annually bring his celebrated pack, conferring a double service by the act—perfectioning the younger hounds, and driving foxes into the lower coverts of Carlow and Wexford. Kildare has, or ought to have, an immense stretch of similar fox haunt, though I do not think it is all utilised, and a sinister rumour (which I hope is as baseless as many of Fame's utterances prove) has reached me that the monks of La Trappe have improved fox life completely off one rich hill district, when there used to be not only an abundance, but even a plethora, of fox life. Sir David Roche rejoices in such a "hunting privilege," as the Yankees phrase it—a district which may be measured by the square mile rather than the acre; and here Sir David has wisely erected kennels and hunting quarters, so as to leave his more artificial lowland country undisturbed till later in the season. By the way, this pack have had an extraordinary run of upwards of two hours and a half already this month, meeting a travelling fox as they were on their return to their kennels late in the afternoon. A favouring moon enabled the staff to collect the hounds at 7.15 P.M.

This pack has secured some ten brace or so of masks already—a number which is just about equalled by the Meath hounds, whose cubbing season extended to nineteen days, but who have already abandoned rehearsal for the actual campaign this week, in common with their neighbours, the Louth, and also the Carlow hounds. The Meath is best known as the finest pastoral country, for its size, in the world. One huge sheet of fattening grass, subdivided by large fences, it has a background of wild hill

country; and the district round Lough Shelah is admirably adapted for spring and autumn hunting, not to speak of its most attractive and picturesque scenery. Your columns have already announced that Meath hunts five times per week, and all experts maintain that the game supply and extent of country fully warrant the increase in the number of days devoted to the sport of kings. Already have the strongholds of Headfort, Loughcrew, Allenstown, Summerhill, and Dunsany, proved most prolific of foxes; while in the woods of Cabra Castle two county packs found ample scope for hunting twice a week. I should not omit that this pack has been wonderfully strengthened by the Curraghmore recruits who have given unqualified satisfaction.

The Kildare hounds, though not so early afield as some other packs, have had a very fair share of blood, and more than an average share of sport. Two of their matutinal performances have been quite equal to the best things that an average season can be expected to yield, two good old foxes taking them along, at a fearful pace over those fine lines from Straffan to Courtown, and from Mount Armstrong to the same neighbourhood. Their second whip, who during the cubbing season still wore his Pytchley facings, proved that Lord Spencer had entered him well; he is a very promising draft. Westmeath is still in the hands of its hunting committee, but I hear that so far, though masterless, they are far from foxless, and anticipate a good season, Matthews, the late first whip, having been promoted to the horn, and Goodall, who was last year with Mr. Gerard Leigh, acting as first whip. If he only rides up to his name, he will be sure to do well. Lord Doneraile's hounds are reported to have done very well so far; while to summarise the matter in hand, though a few plague spots darken the hunting map of Ireland, on the whole the prospects of the coming season may be described as most cheering.

November 6th, 1875.

The poet who glorified agriculture and country life in general tells us, in his mellifluous verse, that the year revolves in its own footsteps—

in se sua per vestigia volvitur annus.

To those still in their teens its wheels seem to drive as heavily as those of Pharaoh's chariots when embedded in the sand and shingle of the Red Sea, while perhaps to those of many lustrums the revolutions may seem alarmingly rapid. But, be that as it may, almanacks and calendars—peradventure, too, our importunate creditors—inform us that the days of October are over, while the signs and portents of altered nature, and the temperature of our own body, confirm the verdict of astronomy and calculation. The last swallow has departed from us, and is now probably careering in brighter and warmer air; a cheerless and wan-faced sun lights up a duller and seemingly contracted space of firmament. The mingled green and gold of the woodlands are now exchanged for russet hues and tints of red sparsely shot with yellow. The "tender ashe," which "delayed to clothe herself when all the trees were green," as the poet phrases it, is now leafless and bare, and the cold shimmer which Millais so well interpreted in his lake scene, "Chill October," seems to overspread the entire landscape. But what are all these æsthetic considerations to the foxhunter "of the true and genuine sort, whose heart and soul are in the sport," as the rhymer describes him? The winter of his content is fast opening out bright vistas of venatic glory to his prophetic view. "Nunc pede libero pulsanda tellus"—not the hard-baked gritty turf of summer and autumn, but the elastic and spongy sod well moistened by the latter rains of the month just passed, which is so congenial to the hunter's hoof that he longs to extend himself the moment he touches its verdant margin. Let us hope that

such a man will have his lines cast in a country where the young foxes have been taught the sweet uses of adversity in wholesome lessons of practical self-defence, and where a select number have been victimised *pour encourager les autres.* Let us hope, too, that his hunters have been well schooled cubbing and with harriers, and that, while he has hardened his heart by renewed familiar intercourse with the fences, he has simultaneously hardened his muscles and those nether sections of the body on which the saddle makes such havoc after long desuetude. In Ireland the cubbing season is generally protracted till November, though some half-dozen packs, notably the Meath hounds, anticipate the time-honoured barrier, and slide into regular hunting during the last days of October — a measure which the impatient keenness of the pursuers probably accelerates in most places, though very often the exchange is made of sharp cubbing mornings for indifferent days of regular hunting. If impatience is rampant in the shires and provinces of Ireland, what must it be among those metropolitan pursuers who take their pleasure (and not "moult tristement") with the Ward Union Staghounds, whose ardour is daily goaded by reports of fine sport with such and such foxhounds while they are compelled to remain inactive, seeing that "fawn hunting,"—or shall we say "fawning?"—has no place now among the sports of disafforested Ireland? And yet they managed to snatch a few days from the limbo of idleness by hunting (with a view to securing) a few red deer in Sir Charles Domville's park at Santry, which the committee had judiciously purchased for the season's campaign. That campaign opens formally, as all sportsmen on this side of the Channel know full well, on the 27th of October; and its prelude is what the Yanks call a free lunch, to which all fairly accredited sportsmen, be they peers or proletarians, soldiers or civilians, dukes or dustmen, find hearty welcome provided only they belong to the guild and mystery of woodcraft. On ordinary occasions it is well worth coming any distance from the country

to assist at this opening ceremonial. By twelve o'clock Dublin finds its streets enlivened by glimpses of leathers and pinks, second horsemen, and all the paraphernalia of hunting, seeking its northern outlets; while, by the time you have traversed a few miles on the Northern road, the scene will present not a few of the aspects of the Rugby road on the occasion of the Grand Military at the Hillmarton course, as the Ward Union Hunt was originally mainly stimulated by the garrison of Dublin, and "the soldiers" always share largely in the glories and casualties of the Ward Union season. On this special Wednesday the rain storm, which had been unintermittent for thirty or forty hours, paused slightly in the forenoon, but, recommencing with increased vigour, by twelve o'clock made hunting a not too pleasurable outlook. It was not *après nous le déluge*, but *avant nous le déluge*, overspreading and omnipresent. The carmen one passed mocked and jeered at the visible signs and tokens of hunting, which we bore as bravely as we could through storm and rain, fortunately on a good hack—a grandson of old Touchstone—which the kindness of Mr. Leonard Morrogh had furnished. It is a dull, monotonous road to traverse at all times, the twelve miles 'twixt Dublin and Ashbourn, unrelieved by trees or architectural features of interest. The villages we passed on the road looked as if Shane O'Neil or some other northern chieftain had sacked them in some southern foray, and they had remained *in statu* ever since. The modest Tolka was in full spate. The cabbage fields, which supply greens to the beef-eaters of Dublin and Manchester by the ton, looked dismal; and, when one emerged on the fine green plains past Finglas village, the country seemed turning into mere, while the roads were submerged. All the well-known rivers, such as the Ward, were not only brimful, but overflowing; the lock of the bay alone seemed to want some five or six feet to be level with its cavernous banks. Ashbourn's village, reached at last, presented a beggarly array of empty yards; only

one coach, Mr. O'Reilly's, had faced the storm, conveying but a limited liability company of pinks, which of course included Mr. T. Turbett, and the 17th Lancers sent a very small carriage load to the scene. Instead of constant relays of guests, two tables sufficed for all the comers. Under these circumstances *que faire?* Hunting was just possible; but was it wise? Mr. Leonard Morrogh held a council, and the interest of the farmers and graziers, who are the corner-stone of hunting here, was prudently considered; so the only thing to do was to see the pack fed under the auspices of Charley Brindley—hale, cheery, and pleasant as ever—to glance at the celebrities of the deer park, "Cabinet Minister," "The King," and the Knowsley lot, and to inspect the well-chosen hunters of the establishment—among whom a bay named Dan, from the coincidence of his having been bought the day Liberator won the "big lep" race at Galway, seemed the most notable for the combination of power and liberty without lumber; while the Porto Rico grey mare, that has carried Charley to the front for four seasons with only a single fall, seems as fresh and fit as when she first joined the string. Order, neatness, and fitness mark everything about this establishment, even to the finishing of the hayricks and the straw coping of the thatch; while the condition and discipline of hounds and horses seemed admirable. If this rain abate not, can hounds hunt? seems to be a problem. I fear me much we shall be compelled to adopt the tactics of Proteus, and seek the mountain ridges for our hunting grounds—

> Omne cum Proteus pecus egit altos
> Visere montes.

The higher levels to which I am impelled by circumstance and the chain of events are Mr. Cosby's happy hunting grounds in the Queen's County, in the hopes of assisting, to speak Gallically, at his opening day on the 30th ultimo.

To one travelling by rail from Dublin or the neighbourhood, I may

state, for the guidance and information of Zingari sportsmen, that Athy and Maryboro' stations are the two portals to Stradbally village, which you can reach after a drive of six or seven miles English. Close to the village, which nestles under the shadow of wooded hills and the trees of the hall, is Mr. Cosby's stately residence, which the hospitality of the proprietor and Mrs. Cosby has long associated with some of the sunniest memories of pleasant days and festive nights in the minds of not a few visitors from all parts of the social world. It was my fortune to have to drive to Stradbally from the vicinity of Naas, and of two roads I believe I selected the longer one, *viâ* Kilcullen and Athy, having been recently much impressed by the graphic sketches of your flooded Midlands, and fearing much that the shorter route, *viâ* Vickarstown, Kildangan, etc., might be in the same parlous condition of submersion. "Tutus si tardus" is no bad motto when driving in these days of meteorological *bouleversement*, and so I found it, meeting no obstacle on that marvellously straight stretch of road which, passing by Carrick Hill, Bull Hill, Fontstown, and many other places of fame and tradition in Kildare hunting annals, finds its terminus at length at the Moat of Ardskull, a wooded acclivity from which you may survey at your leisure the wide valley of the Barrow, which agriculture and engineering science have long been striving to redeem from the invasion of superficial water and the neglect of by-gone ages. Consequently its fields do not look lovely or jocund to the hunting eye, intersected as they are by huge drains wide enough for gondolas, and cut up by deep ploughing. But the agriculturist cannot help being struck by the superior stamp of the farm tenements, and by the vast ricks of straw which speak more of the *panis* than the *circenses* to which we are speeding. There is nothing to detain you, artistically or otherwise, in the good town of Athy. The Barrow filled every arch of its fine bridge, but did not overflow the streets, as I had anticipated or feared, and a few historic old ruins tell of a past in which the Geraldines,

(Fitzgeralds,) lords of the surrounding soil for many a mile, were the chief actors. In a mile or two you reach the Queen's County, where the fields seem to have contracted visibly, and tilth and pasture alternate about equally. In another half-hour your road will pass through some of the fairest park scenery to be met with in the interior of Ireland, Brockley Park and Ballykilcavan presented fine views of wooded hillside and plain for a considerable extent. But here we are at Stradbally, and, as the Orchard Races attract many visitors and owners of horses, I may mention that good boxes and horse keep are to be had in the town. Stradbally Hall, Mr. Cosby's park, is of very large acreage, and finely wooded, and watered by a mountain stream, which, aided by art and a tributary or two, forms a goodly lake close to the hall, full of trout. This stream has been utilised so far that, by means of a turbine wheel, it affords the motive power for the home farm and the extensive stables. Our business is with the latter; and if Mr. Newton, the stud groom, be your cicerone, I can promise you a treat, if you are really an amateur of horse-flesh and seeing horses done as they should be, and everything, from washing-house to saddle-room, as taut and ship-shape as in an old-fashioned, well-appointed, well-commanded seventy-four. But we have no time to pause over the Turkish baths and other modern aids to stable management and economy. Suffice it to say—*pace* Mr. Matt Arnold—that sweetness and light reign supreme in the Stradbally Hall stables; and their tenants, though perhaps as hard-worked as any hunt horses in the kingdom, show that their ministering spirits have not been idle or neglectful of their interests. Newton introduced me to sixteen or seventeen horses, every one of whom seemed to my eye in the very pink and bloom of hard fettle, the result of good summering and a busy cubbing season. Many of the hunters, like Goldsmith's chest of drawers, are made a double debt to pay—to hunt in the winter and compete for Welter, Veteran, and other trophies in the summer and spring; so that

not a few have made their bow to the public long ago. Such is what one is bound to call Mr. Cosby's cup horse Old Redman, who began, I believe, his career on the flat, then went to chasing, and has ever since carried a huntsman well and truly in his turn, and added not a few silver triumphs to Mr. Cosby's sideboard. He is a very level, true-shaped chestnut of deep hue, with a capital middle piece and the best of loins and quarters, and ought to be at home with 13st. on his back in the hunting field. True Nell is of quite different stamp, and looks more like flying over Leicestershire than negotiating banks and ditches in her native land; but training and temper have borne her most successfully through difficult courses, and she carries Mr. Cosby in the winter and wins an odd race in her turn. Swordsman and The Palmer are two good, square, old-fashioned wear-and-tear hunters of fair stamp, and The Wanderer, though rather high on the leg, belongs to the same class. Sampson, an importation from the Kildare hunting stables when Sir Edward Kennedy resigned the mastership, is, in my opinion, the best-looking weight-carrier in the stable. He has good speed for a hunter, and may beat a slow lot of chasers some day, if the country be only big enough, and the weights high. Dean Swift has proved himself a fair chaser, but I should hardly like him as a hunter; while Nora, by Red Heart, is a most perfect and accomplished huntress, and has also distinguished herself in the prize ring with her stable companion, Swordsman. These are, I think, the most noteworthy in the hunting stables, though there are a few others of promise, the offspring of those good sires Claret, The Lawyer, and Daniel; and all may be warranted accomplished, if not amiable, like the brides in the press notices.

Mr. Cosby's team of liver-coloured chestnuts (old Mr. Kenyon of Pradoe's favourite team colour) would show well even in the Magazine and Hyde Park Corner line in May. It is admirably turned out and appointed. But the minute hand of our watch is pointing to a quarter to 11 A.M., and we are nearing the monastic

little village of Timahoe, situated in a happy and well-watered valley. (Trust the monks for a good selection). On a fine day we might have admired its very perfect round tower—remnant, so they say, of the Aryan race; but the surroundings were more suggestive of the *nil admirari* philosophy. A biting east wind was driving a *mitraille* of small rain into our faces. The swan upon St. Mary's lake floats double, swan and shadow, says the bard; so did not the swans we passed on the Stradbally Lake, for a tempestuous night had raised a legion of little waves on its turbid surface—and indeed the word turbid will most aptly describe the thick, eclipsy sort of atmosphere which enveloped us. As were the elemental conditions, so were the attendant sportsmen—half-a-dozen red coats, and about as many black, formed into shivering groups in the square of Timahoe—and the gaps in the usual gallery of pursuers were most conspicuous. Mrs. Cosby, Sir Allen Walsh, Colonel Sullivan, Major and Mrs. Neville, whom one generally identifies with the fortunes of this pack, were absentees; while among the little band of pursuers whom the weather had not daunted the eye recognised at once Mr. Hamilton Stubber, on a very good-looking son of Lord Conyngham's "younger son"; Mr. Bland, riding a flea-bitten grey mare, which proved subsequently to be as good as she looked; Mr. Corcoran, Mr. Dunne, the Messrs. Moore of Cremorgan, Messrs. Hawksworth, Mr. Thacker, Mr. Webber, and that veteran and ubiquitous sportsman, Mr. Horace Rochfort, of the co. Carlow, who has seen and ridden more good runs on both sides of the Channel than most men, and will be with them to-day, be sure, on that stepping little grey (well known in Kildare), if they find soon and go off straight. The hounds, some eighteen couple of dogs, are now moving on, and a glance suffices to show that Snaith, the huntsman, knows how to turn out his charge, and that he is well supported by Tom M'Allister, the first whip, and Roseblade, the second. The *mise en scène* is simply perfect; pity there are so few spectators of the first stage! We are trotting on to Coolnabacca, the first draw. A mile or two of gravelly hills have here been planted, and are

covered with an undergrowth of hazel scrub, which the hounds are drawing on either side, while we ride along the top ridge, which is not much broader than the knife-board of a London 'bus. Snaith is evidently no pupil of Jem Hill's, for his drawing is conducted on the silent system; but perhaps he has a good reason for his reticence of dog talk. At last, as we were nearing the end of the wood, some music greets the ear; presently a brace of foxes emerged and, by the perversity which stamps all things on particular infaust days, one fox breaks away over a good line, while the pack have selected a cub, whom they ran with great pertinacity and much music for an hour along the aforesaid ridges till he got to ground; while the only amusement afforded to the outside public was in the eccentricities of a fine young horse, who galloped into a bed of sturdy thistles, and executed such fandangoes and boleros that his rider's adhesive powers were very highly tried. The day improving, we were now joined by some accessions, among whom was a young lady in a blue habit, who seemed to handle her neat bay cob in real workmanlike style. Cremorgan, the next draw, was full of foxes, and by continuous ill-luck a good old fox went off handsomely, *coram populo*, while the pack stuck, for I fancy more than an hour, to a cub, who just beat them as he was fast sinking into an open burrow. One of the fields we had to cross and re-cross was full of deep drains, and, as they were very blind, there was danger enough for those who courted it. The day was now far spent, but as yet cub hunting was all it had produced, A move to Raheenduff, a small knoll covered with hazel scrub, which is under the guardianship of Mr. Corcoran, sure warrant for finding, altered the complexion of things mightily. In five minutes a grey old *vieille moustache* emerges, and, racing past Raheenduff House, wins his way to a fine oblong gorse, a mile or more distant, known as Sling Gorse. The field, always small, was now very select, and our master had exchanged Swordsman for Nora; while perhaps a few others wished they could pick up a second horse, as the country was about as holding as the Harrow district now probably rides

after these continuous rainfalls. From Sling our old fox was soon bustled out, when he ran a ring towards Raheenduff and Cremorgan, but presently pointed for Cullenagh, a very large oval-shaped hill, gorse-covered on its top, from which a very fine view of many counties may be gained in clear weather. Fortunately for men and horses, he did not attempt this acclivity, but, facing a strong breeze, ran parallel with its ridge for a mile or two, crossing a very stiff bit of bank-and-ditch country, where one seemed almost always in the air. All are riding; but the grey mare I spoke of (grey as Mrs. Perkins's well-known charger) is carrying her master (Mr. Bland) more continuously close to the pack than anything I see. Mr. Crawford, of the 60th Rifles, whom Mr. Cosby has mounted on a good, thick, well-bred bay mare, is also going with great confidence, and so is a man on a well-bred chestnut pony. A road is now crossed, out of which a wall leads us into even a stiffer bit of country, and a high, rotten bank, which Mr. Dunne gets over successfully, brings a heavy man on a smart old grey to some grief and horse-chasing. The fox now returns to the vale, crosses another road, and hounds are whipped off close to Lennon's Gorse, which Mr. Cosby was naturally at this hour unwilling to disturb. The day now wanes, and darkness overtakes us. Good-byes are said hurriedly, and flasks are emptied, for 'tis raining fast. I believe they made the time fifty minutes, and all over grass, barring one field next the covert—a very successful first day for those who saw its termination. Harlequin, a fine lengthy hound, particularly distinguished himself to-day. An *affiche* in the daily papers informs us that the Ward Union hounds were again baulked by floods, on this same Saturday; so I had reason to rejoice in the exchange of country I had made. The Louth hounds commenced their cubbing on the 7th of September. With a single exception, it was uneventful, but foxes proved very abundant everywhere. Like their neighbours of Meath, they began hunting on the 19th ult., opening at Castle Bellingham, when a cub was the first victim, while a Charleville fox gave the field a real good forty minutes' running by Greenmount

and Drumcar, and eventually beating the pack. A smart scurry from Bragganstown wound up the day.

On the 21st a good old fox broke from Formby Hall, and, after one or two rings, struck out for the Meath country, pointing for Tankardstown, but, turning at Slane, made his way over Barsterris Hill, then dropped down to the banks of the Boyne, and got to ground by Stackallan Bridge, after a very good hour and thirty-five minutes, during which not less than ten miles were covered.

On the 25th, after a ring from Drakestown, they had a sharp straight thing from Skedag to Aclare, where their fox got to ground, after standing up for twenty-one minutes.

On the 28th, they met at Duleek, but, as the lowlands were in flood, they came on to the Carnes. Here they killed a fox in covert, ran another through Hilltown over Bellewstown racecourse, and killed a third in Hilltown Demesne, after one hour and twenty minutes.

The Carlow hounds had a most unpropitious day of tempest for their opening; and as was the weather so was the sport.

The Newbridge harriers had a very fine run from Halverstown to Hatfield the other day, after several early rings. But, while speaking of harriers, I must say that one of the pleasantest surprises I have had for many a day was on a visit I paid to the kennels of Mr. John Preston, of Bellinter. It was in the time of roses, and we plucked them as we passed, literally; so I had no opportunity of seeing the beautifully symmetrical twenty-five couple of small foxhound bitches—drafts, for the most part, from the North Pytchley, Quorn, Curraghmore, and Louth kennels—at work. But they must belie their looks and breeding sadly if they are not admirable, and *le bon sang ne peut pas mentir* is ofttimes perhaps truer of hounds than humans. I should think nothing can be more perfect and even artistic in finish than the kennels, which are under the efficient management of John Suter, while the hunt horses, more especially the seven greys, selected as they have been from celebrities all over the island, and full of fashion, breeding, and

substance, are worth going any distance to see. I cannot now do justice to the subject, and can only remark *en passant* that no one can be said to have an adequate notion of the hunting establishments of Ireland till he has paid a visit to Bellinter. Time and space forbid my noticing now the opening efforts of the Kildare pack—the struggles, successes, and failures of their following.

November 2nd, 1875.

"Up rouse ye then, my merry merry men,
This is our opening day."

The second of November is a *jour férié* over most parts of hunting Ireland, seeing that on that special day the close season for foxes is proclaimed at an end (cubbing is merely a preliminary discipline for their better education in the art of self-defence), and, north, south, east, or west, a *guerre à outrance*, though conducted on the most courtly, formal, and refined principles, is proclaimed against foxhood generally. On this day all the Irish packs, with some four or five exceptions, commence the simultaneous onslaught, and Mr. Burton Persse in the far west, the Marquis of Waterford in the south-east, Lord Huntingdon or his deputy in the midlands, and Mr. Edmund Mansfield in Kildare, will all be grave and reflective, to state it mildly, if at least one mask, one gory scalp, dangles not from the saddle dees ere they return home to-night. If foxes are learned in the past and have got up history, this day will be a regular St. Bartholomew in their calendar; but, as on that fatal night, while the majority of the unsuspecting Huguenots succumbed, courage, quickness, and resolution saved not a few from the assassin's knife, so it will be to-day—the soft-hearted, hesitating, unready foxes will fall an easy prey to the avenger; the bold, alert, and high-couraged will have a hundred chances of escape to one of destruction. Why the first Tuesday in November should have been selected for the holocaust is not readily to be explained; but once the date was settled by con-

sensus it would be no easy matter to change it; and so conservative are hunting traditions in Ireland that I am sure, if any innovation of the Calendar were rashly proposed (say in Kildare), the lords of the soil and their followers would unanimously protest against it—aye, perhaps as indignantly as their ancestors, when they declared with one voice *nolumus leges Angliæ mutari!* In Kildare the date is not only a fixture, but so is the trysting place, and the village of Johnstown has always the honour of being the opening scene of the fox campaign. And there is no denying that the selection is a very happy one, inasmuch as it is nearly the centre of the country, within a mile of Sallins, the portal for pursuers from Dublin or Kilkenny, while fourteen Irish miles is not too far to put it beyond pleasant driving distance from the metropolis. It has further the advantage of being little more than a short mile from Naas, the county town, and if tradition be reliable, the residence once of the Kings of Leinster. Johnstown and the Johnstownians do well to cling to this almost solitary gala day in their year, for mouldiness and melancholy and a chronic invasion of damp have long marked it for their own. The posting house, the Mayo Arms, was no doubt "quite a place," as the Yanks phrase it, in the old coaching days, but now it mourns its life and profits transferred to the railway folk—*Mantua væ miseræ nimium vicina Cremonæ*—and the poor crusaders who support the Mayo quarterings look like decayed servitors trying in vain to put a cheerful courage on, ague-stricken Mark Tapleys asserting their philosophy with wan careworn visages.

There is a fine mill with good water power handy; but the wheel revolves not, and the grinding stones are silent. On the 2nd, however, colour, life, and motion change the aspect of everything. There is a stir among the dry bones soon after ten, as led horses come flocking in, and the early breakfasters drive up in cars and carriages, to take up their position in the single street, just as they would at Lord's on the Eton and Harrow or University day. The hounds of course form a *point de mir*, as they are

drawn up in serried phalanx on a bit of grass by the wayside under the guardianship of Will Freeman and his two acolytes, both more or less strangers to Kildare; for Will Nevard, the first whip —about the best man I ever saw cross a country on a difficult horse—turns them no more, having gone back to England. By their side is Mr. Edmund Mansfield, the master, on Forester, a powerful son of Woodman; and well pleased must he be with the universal verdict of approbation and commendation on the good looks and bloom of the pack which a very critical country has committed to his management, and he has got over the difficulty of securing a good first whip at very short notice with apparent success. Everything is of roseate hue, save the morning weather, which, preceded by a most rainy and temptestuous night, is now dark with driving, murky rain, and presently beams out with intermittent gleams of warm, bright sunshine. At any rate, the temperature is warm and pleasant, and the *poil rebroussé* is not found on men or horses. (Of course, the women are always divine.)

Let us observe some of the arrivals as they pull up opposite the Mayo Arms. The Killashee carriage, roomy and old-fashioned in its air of comfort, has a large freight behind its greys, among whom are the Marquis and Marchioness of Drogheda and Mrs. Chaplin. The Hon. Mrs. Forbes's browns move along, as is their wont, with much stateliness and precision. The Baroness de Robeck has filled a waggonette with guests from Grange Gowran, and so has the Hon. Mrs. Barton, from Straffan House; while Lyons and Furniss have each contributed a car-load to the ladies' gallery. Mr. O'Reilly's handsome and effective team has brought down from the metropolis half a score of flooded-out Ward Union sportsmen, while the Bays' coach from Newbridge is well filled. Lady Annette La Touche and Lady Edith Monck are chaperoning friends and visitors to the animated scene; and indeed in the quarter of an hour between 10.45 and 11 A.M., there is as complete a block of carriages, cars, T-carts, mail phaetons, and pony traps in Johnstown as Bond Street ever boasted

in the sunniest afternoon in June. Among the ladies *en amazone* were Mrs. Tynte, of Tynte Park, always perfectly mounted; Miss De Robeck, on an anxious chestnut; Mrs. Davis, of Courtown, riding a very neat daughter of Blood Royal; Miss Irwin; Lady Eva Bourke, on a smart Arab cob; Miss O'Kelly; and Miss Kilbee, of Canny Court, on a daughter of her celebrated chestnut pony—*matre pulchrâ filia pulchrior*, but perhaps not yet quite so good or accomplished a huntress as her maternal parent; but several of the fliers of the hunt, among whom Mrs. Schwabe takes high rank, were either hunting on wheels, or, as is most probable in the latter case, enjoying, or trying to enjoy, inferior sport in a very different sort of country in England.

Large as was the gathering—a monster one, considering the capricious temper of the day, and the certainty of coming in for heavy showers sooner or later—there were not a few gaps in the ranks of what may be considered the *habitués* of this hunt. The house of Fitzgerald was represented by Lord Maurice (I think some of the Ladies Fitzgerald also graced the opening scene), the Marquis of Kildare having followed the strong Eastern current which is now setting towards India and Japan, and taken with him Capt. R. Saundars, of Saundars Grove. Col. Forster and Sir M. Hicks Beach were not seen in Johnstown to-day; the pleasant presence of the Lord of Bishopscourt was not there; Mr. W. Forbes was not seen at any stage of the day's proceedings; Sir Edward Kennedy and his two hard-riding sons were also absentees, and so was the young squire of Morristown Lattin; Sir Erasmus Borrowes answered not the roll-call, nor did the veteran Capt. Wakefield, nor yet Capt. Tuthill. Indeed, there were many most noticeable absences; but it boots not now to tell who had married a wife and could not come—who thought of "first days" as promiscuous mobs, and avoided this particular one on principle—on whom the hand of illness had fallen—and who had migrated like the swallows to southern skies. By eleven o'clock the cry was like that of Macbeth from Dunsinane, "Still they come,"

and Mr. Edmund Mansfield relaxed somewhat from the preciseness of his punctuality to allow the strangers an extra ten minutes or so to find their horses and give parting orders to their grooms. Of visitors there was no small number out; among them Sir Charles Burton, Gen. Glynn, Capt. Cole, Mr. R. Malone (late field master of the Westmeath hounds), Col. Lyster, etc. The army was strongly represented, and a detachment of Inniskillings had come all the way from their northern quarters to be at this opening meet, among them Capt. O'Neal and Mr. Frederick. Gen. Seymour was on a very fine weight-carrying bay, and Capt. Lee, his A.D.C., had Simon under him; while Capt. Boulderson, now on the staff, was, I believe, riding something of good fame. Gen. Irwin's chestnut is hard to beat over a big country, and Mr. Knox, of the artillery, was steering an animal that could gallop and jump with the best, and lost no time in proving it. Col. Chaplin, Capt. Denne, and some of their brother officers of the 4th Dragoon Guards, were also in the ranks of pursuers. At last there is a move, and a procession, so extended that for safety sake it had to move at funereal pace, defiled through the entrance gates of Kerdiffstown—the park of Mr. T. Hendrick, and only divided from the larger area of Palmerstown by the river Morrill, which presently spreads itself out into a very ornamental expanse of lake, studded wlth islets, and set in a frame of the most glorious colouring by the russet-leaved beech trees which feather down to its margin. Kerdiffstown House and offices passed, we debouch into a large grass pasture, on one side of which the commanding officer of the day and his gallopers post the horsemen and those of the carriage folk whose horses are thought quiet enough to stand the stampede which is sure to be enacted in a few minutes, for the gorse is at the far side of this pasture, and it rarely fails to hold. In ten minutes the fox has broken, and those who saw the fox say he is a veteran; at any rate, he is no dallier.

And now, if you have a steady old crock in your shafts or

under you, pause for a moment, and watch the effect of the rush on the nervous system of many of the young horses out—some overpowered with agitation, others frantic with delight, nearly all impatient of curb or knee pressure, and dying to join the tumult. *Turba ruit;* the fox has set his head towards the canal which runs parallel to the Great Southern and Western line, crossing two or three large pastures, over which men and horses are careering wildly, and, though all are steering in a nor'-easterly direction, very few seem to be steering for the same point. On his road our fox passes through two or three belts of plantation, and in one of these the pack exchange their Kerdiffstown fox for a Palmerstown cub (this at least is the theory), who naturally seeks the sylvan haunts of his youth, and after some bustling about is run into ingloriously, not far from the Dublin road. The obsequies over (and a certain pomp naturally attends them on the First day), and the salmi of fox flesh and fur duly absorbed by the hungry hounds, a move was made to Bishopscourt's Gorse. The field were posted at rather a greater distance than usual from the avenue to the covert, and very wisely so, I think, for the gorse area is extremely small, and not very isolated either. Four cubs turned up here, and after some little delay one of them was forced out towards the Dublin gate, when he bent slightly towards Pigeon's Hill, and crossing the Blackchurch road was turned up incontinently on the other side. In justice to the Bishopscourt foxes I must say this was no fair specimen, for he was no *indigène*, an *accident*, we were informed, having occurred to the vixen of the place; and *accident*, in trapping language, is almost equal to the American term *difficulty*—euphemisms to soften unpleasant facts. A mile or two of trotting brings us up to Boston Gorse; here two foxes (at least) turned up, and one broke resolutely. Crossing the road not far from a disused police barrack, he pointed for the windmill, and it looked for a minute or two as if we were to have a scurry over part of last year's redcoat course. Hounds were running fast,

for it was straight up wind. Presently the fox inclines towards Oughterard Hill and Bishopscourt, but coming to the road finds it carriage-lined, so he runs up along a hedge, makes his way to Cullen's Wood, and thence back to Boston; meanwhile a few couple of hounds have been rushed up Oughterard Hill by certain impetuous horsemen, but they very soon picked up the rest of the pack. A second fox broke away from Boston, in much the same direction; but his running career was a brief one, as he got to ground a few fields from home. Kill Hill Gorse was tried on the off chance (it had been cut down not long ago); but it did not hold a fox, so we held on to Eadestown Gorse, some three or four miles distant, which, though very small and not very thick, is as certain a find as almost any covert I can name. Daylight was on the wane; but we were not long in suspense, as "gone away" was in the air five minutes after the hounds had been "lued" in. His point was for Punchestown Gorse, and the field divided, part making play along the left side of the gorse, the remainder taking the right. The fields near the covert are poor, and not all grass-covered, but they carried a rare scent. The first division, among whom were Lord Mayo, the Hon. C. Bourke, and Mr. Cassidy, found themselves presently stopped by wire, which is very rampant in this part of the country; and the stop was well-nigh a full one, as just then the fox turned sharp to the right, and, crossing the Blessington road, passed through Mr. Melia's farm, crossed a bit of stiff country subdivided by rugged and ragged banks, ran through Forenaghts demesne, where a widish sunk fence had to be done the reverse or up way, and finally got to ground in or near to Mr. Love's farm, and not very far from the point where we had all met in the morning. In the first afternoon scurry many seemed inclined to ride hard, notably Mr. Percy La Touche, the Hon. E. Lawless, Capt. Cole, the Messrs. Blacker, etc.; but in the evening run, which I hear they made twenty-three minutes, Mr. Robert Kennedy proved himself as able to retain his post of pilot as if the Trinity House

had specially licensed him. A small number who remained to the end rode home in heavy rain.

On Thursday, Nov. 4, the Kildare hounds were to be found at eleven o'clock at Tinoran cross roads, and the meet was of totally different characteristics from Tuesday's. The point of assemblage is nearly twenty miles from the kennels, and, I should think, fully half that distance from any town or station that may be studied in the columns of the Irish 'Bradshaw.' The hounds lie out at Dunlavin, some six or seven miles off, and boxes may be had for hunters there, as well as at an extremely neat, cosy little village called The Grange (much nearer), where the forethought of Mr. David Mahony has long since erected very good hunting-stables for casuals and for the overflow of his own guests. The aforesaid cross roads, which were our North Poles to-day—the magnet which drew us from the pleasant lowlands through fog, mist, and rain, and a melancholy, languid, tepid sort of atmosphere, surcharged with damp and decay, in which the leaves, soaked and saturated by days and nights of incessant rain, sank down lazily to join their myriad fellows on the wet ground—lie under the shadows thrown out by a huge hummock of the same name, which is really very high, but, owing to its great girth and solid proportions, conceals its tallness till you find yourself on the summit and gain, if the day be clear, a panoramic view of many counties spread out below you. It has a gorse proper duly enclosed on one of its sides, but in addition it has lying on its northern slope for half a score of foxes. The number of sportsmen and lady riders (if I may coin the term) seemed very small after Tuesday's experience, but it embraced not only the pursuers who never desert this pack if possible, but several visitors from the conterminous counties. Thus Carlow sent Capt. Bunbury and his brother, both admirably mounted, one of their hunters—a grey—being a prize taker at the last Dublin show; Mr. Stewart Duckett, on his famous thick, old-fashioned-looking bay Dudeen; and Mr. Beauchamp Bagenal.

Mr. Dunne represented the Queen's county. Mr. Archbold, on Mullingar, seemed admirably mounted also. The gorse appeared full of game, and two foxes ran a ring together, leaving Hughestown to the right, to a place known as the Yellow Earths, where they diverged I believe, and one fox was sent to ground soon afterwards. After just about completing the hill circuit scent served well, and in the somewhat difficult riding hounds beat horses very easily. Lord Aldborough is, I believe, the lord of the soil hereabouts. His house was burnt down in *the* Rebellion, which somehow rather flourished in these now peaceful hunting-grounds; but Baltinglass, which was I suppose his village, looks very flourishing from the mountain side. If the wealthy professor of healing who owes so deep a debt of gratitude to one peer of this name would only take it into his head to build cubbing quarters for men and horses at Baltinglass *in memoriam*, hunting Kildare and Carlow would, I am sure, be grateful, for Corbally Hill, Hughestown, Tinoran, and Baltinglass Hill want a vast deal of rattling and knocking about. It might be an advertisement for

> The pills that cure all ills
> That human flesh is heir to.

Ballyhook, another less exalted hill gorse, produced nothing, but Whitestown Gorse did, in a good fox, who broke quickly in a somewhat unwonted direction towards the Slaney Valley. For a few fields all went very merrily; then at a road the fox made a sharp turn to the right, leading his field over a big country up wind towards the village of Stratford, when he turned again, and in a gorse-grown bank by the side of a turnip field got to ground so effectually that no attempt was made to dislodge him; a very promising gallop, which (scent served so well) must have been fast, was thus marred in its first stage. Tynte Park produced several foxes (I think I could identify two) and some cub-hunting, but nothing decisive, though the squire added a spur to many a heel from his cellar, and a run at one time looked

probable. Louth and luck (hunting luck) seem not only alliterative but true just now, as on Tuesday Mr. Filgate had a rare good hour and five minutes, the fox taking in despair to a wet drain, from which he was not bolted.

Nov. 5. Rain has fallen in quantities sufficient to quench all gunpowder plots. I fear to repeat the calculations of the rainfall of late.

The Ward Union hounds succeeded in getting off at the third effort, and had a good forty-five minutes, ending in water of course.

Want of space prevents my doing more than allude to two charming runs on Saturday, 6th of November, which the Kildare hounds had from Ballycaghan and Hortlands, killing in the former case, or to some sensational scenes by *flood* and field enacted in semi-submerged Meath last week, to which, time permitting, I hope to recur soon.

November 20th, 1875.

Non semper imbres nubibus hispidi
Manant in agros.

That good time spoken of by the Augustan bard has not come yet, for day after day do driving showers continue to deluge the water-logged earth, and night after night do windstorms and rainstorms alternate with provoking regularity! It is, perhaps, hard upon the poor hunting Peris who long stood disconsolate at the golden gate of Time, awaiting with fond vows and eager impatience the tardy advent of November, which was to open plain and pasture, hill and dale, park and paddock—one huge hunting Paradise as a common for themselves and their horses! Harder still if they have have eschewed the allurements of October cubbing, mindful of the blindness of fences and the

adamantine nature of the ground too often. Hardest of all if they be men of thews and sinews ("proper men," as the old Saxon term used to run), with more weight of person than of purse, and consequently limited studs. For, be men never so little of the sybarite, grant them keen as cayenne, hardy as grizzly bears of the Rocky Mountains, incessant rain will pall on the spirits and damp the ardour of the most impetuous; while to the last class I have alluded to, it is simply tempting fate, in the shape of cuts, overreaches, and sprains, to send their horses along while many parts of their hunting-grounds are similar in consistency and glutinous holding power to, say, the field opposite the grand stand at Hendon in a corresponding state of the atmosphere.

Courtown Gate was the fixture for the 6th of November in the Kildare roster, and, as many of your readers and a large proportion of Irish pursuers know, it is the avenue to coverts and pastures so celebrated—the one for their holding qualities, the latter for their extent and pleasant undulations—that men reserve their best horses for this fixture, and forego almost everything to attend these celebrations. *Voi che sapete*, and who have made a personal experience of the delights and dangers of the rapid scurries which each recurring year seems to produce in unfailing series from Hortlands, Cappagh, and Ballycaghan, will, I am full sure, allow nothing but the inevitable and unpostponable to prevent your assisting, to speak Gallically, at one of these great hunting functions.

Those who rail down from Dublin to Sallins—say, *en route* to Punchestown in April—cannot fail to have observed how the left side of their country, supposing them to sit facing the engine, is broken up into systems of hills and valleys, mountain and spurs, reaching down sometimes not far from the iron track itself; while the right is, as far as the eye can reach, a wide basin, whose richness and feeding properties have marked it out mainly for the pasturage of horned stock. Through this valley the Liffey

meanders with many a curve; but beyond its draining influences there is a wide flat, somewhat swampy, though nearly all good riding, which is just now subjected to a process of canalisation—and this interferes not a little with the good runs which are of frequent occurrence in this district, at least so far as straightness of riding and uninterrupted *élan* are concerned. The last of these waterways is past when you cross the Clonshambo cutting, and from that point for miles, stretching away to the plains round Navan and Trim and the Boyne valley, there are such grassy reaches of old pasture land as few countries in the world, barring the Western prairies, can rival. Courtown Gate is within a mile of Kilcock, a village, I believe, common both to Kildare and Meath, and furthermore a station on the Midland line; so that Meath usually contributes her quota to swell these meets, while Dublin sends an odd Ward Union man, wearied perhaps of the *toujours cerf*, to try the glorious uncertainty of foxhunting, and Westmeath and even Galway have this field open to their ambitions. Friday night was windy and pluviose in the extreme, and Saturday morning inherited both tendencies till the assembling hour approached; but the air was warm, and indications were not wanting of the grand scent which we soon learnt all about—conning the lesson some of us, it may be, as we ran after fugitive horses that thought, in the existing state of the going, they could perform better alone.

The meet seemed to every eye a decidedly small one, and no doubt the weather was a deterrent to distant sportsmen. Meath, however, was mustered in some force. Mr. A. M'Neil was there on a powerful chestnut—a brother, I heard, of his prize winner of last year in the Dublin showyard; Col. Forster on Greek Fire—a very beautiful golden chestnut who has already earned his laurels—made his first bow to the Kildare lady pack this season; Mr. Campbell was on a fine stamped flea-bitten grey; Mr. Winter on a useful-looking bay; Capt. Tuthill on his many-seasoned, true-shaped grey horse. Mr. Hone represented the

Stag; Mr. Moore, of Cremorgan, the Queen's county; Mr. George Brooke and his brother Gerald, both always well mounted, and the former apparently none the worse for his fall on the Kildare opening day, appeared, I suppose, as representatives of Dublin, and the harrier interest which they combine with fox-hunting. Several arms of the service were also duly championed —Queen's Bays, Royal Artillery, etc.; and if the number of Kildare pursuers was limited, the quality was very effective.

Courtown Plantations, seldom if ever bare of foxes, held none to-day, for which the wet may reasonably be held responsible; so a move was made to Ballycaghan's fine extent of gorse, a mile or two distant. The approach to it from the road is through a very extensive pasture field, and if the old Adam of idleness and too high feeding be rampant in your hunter, here you can subdue him effectually before the hounds are thrown into the gorse. The field are ranged along a quickset hedge near the covert, with a single gap in its extent, and through this there were one or two ugly rushes in the shape of false starts before the flag really fell. Then the majority go on straight across the broad pasture to the two most popular points in the initial fence, which, though not very wide or ugly, has engulfed not a few. "Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte" is true of horses as of humans, and the patience and confidence which a few successful efforts engender are often wanting at the first encountered obstacle. More pasture follows; then, what is this sinking and subsidence? A Goth has actually turned up a few acres of this rare old turf for his oats or something else. It may be good farming and utilitarian, but I wish he hadn't, as a few hundred yards reduce welter weights to a trot or walk, and hounds are streaming away now many a score of yards in front. A minority, among whom I fancy were Mr. Percy La Touche and Lord Mayo, have gone through the gorse, jumped the boundary, and by thus keeping on the inner circle have gained greatly on the crowd; for the fox inclined at first northwards in the Kilcock direction, but presently,

bold, good fox that he must be, he bethinks him of Cappagh Gorse, about a couple of miles in front of him, faces a head wind, and gains it. Meanwhile as to the field. The second or third fence was a bank, narrow in places, and rising to a thin edge, with a deep drop on the far side; and here a scene that baffles my pen was enacted. In front of me I see a grand black horse, ridden by a very heavy pursuer, going at it; but the holding is very bad for hind legs, the horse can't recover himself and he has jumped big, so prone they come; and, if I mistake not, the immediate successor did about the same. To right and left are men struggling with their nags' bridles, or *planté là* and horseless. Safe on the far side you may congratulate yourself, or pick up a horse if ungratefully tired of your own safety coach. What is this rushing by madly, with fifty or a hundred yards of white tape or web hanging to his bridle? Somebody, I suppose, has tried to lead over the perilous descent. One or two more fences of minor calibre follow—and these you may avoid, I fancy, if you have a quick eye for gap and gate—and the little snuggery of Cappagh Gorse is reached. The hounds have been there some minutes, probably, before you, and are working their quarry very assiduously through it, while you may contemplate at your leisure now the effects of the tumbling on men, horses, and garments! I fancy few ever saw more, if so many, falls over this line; but no one is hurt, and, whoo-whoo-whoop! they have killed him in the gorse, and are now despatching him on the green slope. Eighteen or twenty minutes at such pace was sure to tell. Mr. W. Rynd got his palm in the shape of the brush. The shrubberies and plantations of Cappagh were next searched for a fox said to have been seen there—the very reason, probably, why *we* did not; so on we trotted to Hortland's Gorse, a couple of miles further on in the Sallins, or say, the "Prosperous" direction. A beautiful little gorse it is, now grown very thick, and, as it should be in such fine soil, most rank and luxuriant of colour and aspect. Ten minutes have elapsed, perhaps more,

and every one has decided that it is a blank draw; and, peradventure, not a few on *dubious* hunters have congratulated themselves on escaping the initial fence—a very nasty and repelling one—a narrow bank on the near side, a wide ditch and drop on the further, with no gate or gap or pass within a field; when that mysterious telegraph suddenly conveys to everybody that the fox has gone away from the far corner in the direction of Mount Armstrong, which is, however, a point several miles off. A hundred horsemen are in the air almost simultaneously, about half take the fence I described, others a similar one further on to the left. Soon after comes a very pulpy sort of double, where the foothold is bad and the first ditch a wide one. At this 'Greek Fire' meets with a mischance—whether cannoned against or not I cannot say, but his gallant owner has now to enact the part of the dragoon, who fights, according to the old lexicographers, equally well on foot and horseback, though his own share of fighting has been done in the latter mode—as, for instance, in the Balaklava charge. One more fence and we reach a road, the way out of which is over a rotten, narrow bank, which I think proved an *ultima Thule* to not a few pursuers, amongst others to an ex-senator of St. Stephen's and distinguished cavalry officer. From Hortlands the stereotyped run is to Ballycaghan or Cappagh; but such was not our track to-day, as the fox, after crossing the road, turned his back on their pleasant haunts, and ran a line, very slightly curved, towards Donadea Castle, over grand galloping grass, wonderfully light for the season, all the fences, with perhaps a single exception in a deepish drop, being good enough for a Grand Military. At a road by a small farm-house there is a momentary pause, but only momentary; for on they go almost to the park wall of Donadea Castle, 9ft. high at least, and severely coped. The sight of this may have daunted our fox, pressed hard as he was, for he chose a track parallel to it, then turned sharp to the east by some cross roads, and in a few fields more was safe in a

burrow in Donadea Gorse, a seemingly disused covert. Twenty-five minutes, say the watches, but the distance crossed was considerable, as the pace was very telling, and it was uninterrupted grass, barring two little bits of arable, which it is probable very few rode over. A chestnut horse led the van a great part of the way, ridden and owned, I think, by Mr. A. Macneil, Messrs. Kennedy and Hone, Russell, Murphy, Tynte, Moore, and Brooke, with a few more, foremost among them Lord Mayo, on a fine brown horse, late of Mr. Charles Bourke's stud, Sneeze (I presume by Lundy Foot), were in front more or less all through. The forges round were soon full of eager applicants, and for once lost shoes and dead beat were not synonymous terms. The next draw, Mount Armstrong, yielded no fox. There could be no second opinion as to the high character of the day's sport. Quite a gloom, however, was cast over the morning by the news of a sad accident which befel a groom who was much liked and respected by all, and who had handled and broke many horses of character that subsequently made their mark on either side of the Channel. A very quiet and inoffensive man, generally, I believe, a stable dispute made him strike one of his helpers, and the blow proved fatal.

A clergyman whose horse I had admired a few days previously when out with harriers had a very narrow escape last week. The horse, frightened by a train, ran away and jumped on the parapet of a bridge over the Liffey, where I hear it hung for a few seconds, which his reverence, with consummate presence of mind, utilised in throwing himself off. The horse, I believe, escaped with a dislocated shoulder!

The next day's proceedings in Kildare were of most opposite character; if the antithesis of brilliant be dull, they *were* dull and flat to a degree. The meet was at the town of Kildare, and Silliott Hill sent forth to the wager of battle a fine old dog fox, who chose for his pathway a very fair line of country; but he very soon ran the pack out of scent, for, wonderful to relate, the

day was cold, fine, and frosty, and by no means propitious to scent at its noontide. Dunmurry Hill, next drawn, held a fox, who fell a prey in the gorse, and gave no sport; while the *bonne bouche*, eagerly expected by a large field who studded the green expanse of the Curragh about 2 P.M., in the hopes of seeing the Cemetery Gorse drawn, fell through, owing to a sudden death at the camp, of which the master was apprised. A young lady, whose mount was either too fresh or not familiar enough with banks, had an exceedingly dangerous-looking fall to-day, which unnerved all observers and all near, the principal alone excepted.

The opening pages of the Kilkenny hunting chronicle were completely marred by the severity of the weather. Sport would have been almost miraculous under the circumstances, and no such portent occurred! But Kilkenny may hail in her heart the triumph yet to come, to use poetic diction, seeing that now 'tis no secret that two planets of the sport-loving and sport-fostering houses of Butler and Grosvenor are about shortly to move in one orbit, an orbit which will comprehend the traditionary hunting grounds of Kilkenny. What the hunting fortunes of the county owe to the present chief of the Ormondes is no secret, at any rate in Ireland, while foxhunting on your side of the Channel owes no small tribute of gratitude to the house of Westminster, which has always acted as if not only *noblesse oblige*, but *le nom* as well *(grosveneur)*. A conjunction of such influences on foxhunting ought surely to be of as good augury to Kilkenny as that of Beaufort and Beresford in the next shire. The elements were equally antagonistic to hunting in Westmeath; but fortune favoured the few and brave who defied augury and went to the meet at Lynbury, the residence of Sir Walter Nugent, Bart., which is tantamount to saying that it is the home of hospitality, Rochfort produced a fox in the Island, who got to ground after a ring or two. Kilpatrick Gorse, on the shores of Belvedere Lake, held three (some say five), and the seventeen and a half couple of hounds were soon very close to an

old acquaintance, who skirted Ladestown and Keoltown, and crossed the Boro' Hill, then wheeling to the right tried the earths at Bryanstown Gorse, crossed the Midland Great Western Railway in front of Bryanstown House (the residence of Mr. Jame M'Cormac, a well-known preserver of foxes), thence through Dundonnell, Churchtown, and Milltown, when he was viewed sinking, but he managed to struggle on gamely to an open sewer in Crow Hill, near the village of Loughna Valley. Here, as luck would have it, a sharp terrier made it too hot for him, and he was bolted in full view of the few up, to be turned over in a few seconds. Distance and pace, the entire absence of any hesitating pauses, stamp this gallop of some seven miles as one of the best outcomes of the young season—and some Westmeath men say of many past seasons. Two or three brooks engulfed a certain number of pursuers, and not more than half-a-dozen, I believe, fairly saw the finish. I should mention that the executive of this pack has undergone some change since last year, Sir Walter Nugent and Mr. Levinge having replaced Messrs. Malone and O'Farrell, while Mr. R. Reynell, jun., is the field master. They may well be congratulated upon their first and opening success.

On the 6th they followed up their opening luck with a very fast scurry of twenty-three minutes from Ballinadoon (the place of meeting) to Mornington, where their fox got to ground; while in the afternoon they had thirty-five minutes from Clonhugh to Mount Murray, the last fifteen minutes of which were over the open and very fast.

The same untoward weather which marred the intended grand *caccia* of the Re Galantuomo and his imperial guest at Monza defeated all the earlier efforts of the Ward Union Hunt; but on the third they had such a forty-five minutes over the cream of their grass dairy farm, so to speak, as they can hardly expect to surpass very often. "Sans Souci," the champion deer, enlarged at Fleecetown, ran by Balfestown to the Fairy House racecourse, thence to Rathbeggan, to be finally taken in Coulstown River. Three

were conspicuously in front all through. Last Monday, 8th, I hear that a forty minutes from the Black Bull to Dunshaughlin was, if not quite so brilliant, a very enjoyable gallop.

Mr. Watson found a wonderful stout fox in Ballydaw (the Wexford side of his country) last Thursday. He ran straight for the hills, and the hounds had to be whipped off after a pursuit of ten miles or rather more (which was quite continuous and uninterrupted) by darkness coming on apace. On the following Saturday he sent out a fox from Moorstown, who skirted Rathdaniel and made his way to Lisnavagh; the pursuit was very fast to the banks of the Slaney, then in flood, and only those who had the forecast to ride for the single bridge over it saw the last passages of the run.

From Wexford the accounts of sport are indeed refreshing when contrasted with other localities, where a dearth of game is already more than suspected. After a good cubbing season, Mr. Beatty finds himself fuller of foxes than he ever was, and at the head of a pack which has lost none of its efficiency. The country, 'tis true, is only rideable on certain lines, and over such a line did a most complaisant fox take them last Monday, succumbing only after a good thirty-five minutes. A second fox was hunted for fifty minutes, and hounds were whipped off when they changed foxes.

Continuing the chronicle of Kildare, on Tuesday, at the eighteenth milestone of the old southern coach road from Dublin, an enormous crowd, and very fashionable withal, had congregated by eleven. A white frost promised a dry day, but by noon a soaking downpour set in, which was somewhat hard on the array of ladies who honoured the occasion. A good fox was found directly in Dunstown Wood, which had already furnished a victim or two this season. He broke at once, and entering Harristown Park by Kelly's Wood, he ran through it, crossed the Carnalway Road, and soon afterwards the river Liffey at Newbury, re-crossing it after a brief excursion on the far side, when he re-entered Harristown, and was killed in most beautiful style in a small tributary of the Liffey, one hound proving himself quite equal to tackling an otter by his

water performance. After this Killashee Gorse was drawn, but proved non-holding to-day, and the next step was a short halt at Gowran Grange, the Baron de Robeck's residence, where a cup of comfort and some luncheon did something towards ameliorating the gloomy complexion of the cold, raw, miserable day of rain, that, like the faint wan smiles of a beauty in sorrow which Moore the poet said might as well be tears, might really as well have been snow or sleet, so marrow-chilling and penetrating was it.

Punchestown Gorse is always a most popular draw. It nearly always holds a tenant, and usually a good stout one. To-day nearly a quarter of an hour, nay more, of shivering and ghastly efforts at pleasantry had elapsed, and not a hound had spoken or cap been raised, when presently some one by accident viewed a fine fox stealing off over an unusual line towards Gowran Grange Plantations. In five minutes the pack were on his cold trail, and a general stampede ensued, the majority wisely seeking a gate into the road, the minority charging a timber fence topped with wire, which had, however, one unwired section. Thence down "the Baron's Lane," and by a farm-house with some open and wide grass fields, where, however, scent lay cold, and the first real fence was a very wide bank and ditch, with a deep drop, which, as ill-luck would have it, unseated a very accomplished lady rider on a well-known chaser of some form and fame, and an ex-master of hounds. A slow drag from this point to Silliott Bog was not animating or successful, as we lost him. Elverstown's magnificent gorse was the next stage, and a lofty and cold stage it proved, for when the cloud curtains lifted, the whole of the upper tiers of hills were seen covered with new-fallen snow. After some delay a fox was, by dint of much suasion, induced to break covert, when he ran across the well-known ravine towards Downshire, then, turning, faced the vale, ran at great pace through Punchestown Gorse, and ultimately won his way to the Baron's Bog—also known as Silliott Bog—a large space of moory and heathery land planted a few years ago mainly with Scotch firs. Most of the field were arrested in their

career by wire, and had very hard work to catch the flying pack. (Some say foxes were changed in passing through Punchestown Gorse.) The rain that rained every day and everywhere spared not Galway; nevertheless Mr. Burton Persse can claim two good days' sport for his first week. The woods of Monivea Castle are invariably the scene of the opening efforts of this pack. Two foxes turned up here at once, and one was run to ground, after hard hunting for twenty minutes. From Knockbrock they had some ringing hunting, ending in a kill; and a fast gallop from Belleville ended the day's proceedings. The following Thursday found Mr. Burton Persse in his Tuam country, investigating the never-failing Gallagh coverts, where several foxes turned up. They raced one towards Birmingham for twenty minutes, when a fresh fox jumped up, and gave them a capital twenty-five minutes to ground.

One of the fastest gallops of the young season was enjoyed by the followers of the Newbridge harriers last week, with a hare found close to Ballymanny; it was only a circular affair, but so exceedingly fast, that a sportsman who is not generally mounted on soft, slow, or ill-conditioned hunters assured me he rode his to a standstill on lightish soil of good going. Naturally they killed their quarry.

They had another very quick ring on the 10th instant, with a hare found in Mr. Gannon's fields by Eyrefield and Castle Martin, but there was far more plough encountered in this circuit—home circuit as it may be termed for this merry little pack, which is to the garrison at the Curragh and Newbridge much what the Ward Union hounds are to the "army" in Dublin.

The Kildare hounds were in their Athy country on Thursday, the 11th inst., but left it very soon, as Dollardstown was foxless. The Moat of Ardskull, however, which they reached in the afternoon, held a good fox, who broke covert bravely, and, leaving Fontstown to the left, ran over a fine line of all but continuous grass, which after some forty minutes brought him to Narraghmore Wood; the pace, slow at first, quickened into something

much better as he neared this stronghold; but, once inside the fortress, the laurel tangles and the masses of dead leaves strewed on the ground were all in his favour. However, they hunted him most cheerily for nearly another forty minutes in the woodland, and forced him to head in the direction of Blackrath; but hounds had to be whipped off, owing to the intervention of night and darkness. The day had been fine, but as wintry in its aspects as could be imagined; and a long ride home by the light of a full-orbed frosty moon gives token that we are perhaps in for a dry hard spell.

Lord Waterford's heavy fall and M'Bride's convalescence from a serious attack of illness are among the important events of these latter ten days, while the fine straight riding of a lady from your side of the Channel—a quality and gift she shares with her brother—has been the general theme of admiring comment. On one occasion, however, if not more, like a second Lurline, she lured not a few followers to unknown watery depths, on which they had hardly perhaps reckoned. Among the visitors to Meath's hunting grounds have been the Earl and Countess of Breadalbane.

November 27th, 1875.

When shall we three meet again—
In thunder, lightning or in rain?

The refrain of the witches, whose dark sayings on the blasted heath had such potential influence on the ductile mind of the Thane of Cawdor, may well form a prelude to our notes of Irish sport, the first chapter of which opens with the Kildare hounds, at Castletown, on Saturday, the 13th instant. The weeping genius of lachrymose Hibernia had really dried the fountain of tears, which the truth of history and recent experiences force me to call perennial, for three whole days! A crisp frost had absorbed some of the superficial water; the roads had reverted to a consistency

more resembling "hardbake" than the pea-soup of shipboard; and, on the Friday previous to the date I refer to, the weatherwise were almost unanimous in voting that the dry spell would last for at least twenty-four hours more. The barometer backed them, and in one smoking-room I wot of, a wise pundit quoted Meynell Ingram, Assheton Smith, or some other oracle of the chase, to the effect that with a rising glass sport was almost a certainty, the necessary conditions, of course, being in attendance. This was towards the small hours, and nothing could then be stiller and serener than the atmospheric surroundings. The outlook on Saturday morning was the very antithesis of all this. The heavens were black with rain, which was driven furiously on by a ten-knot gale from the east, cold as the Viento del Norte, for which Madrid has such an evil renown. Pools of water on the surface of the grass pastures showed how heavy the rainfall had been during the few hours of its career, while the horizon was limited to a few hundred yards round you, bounded by a sort of black wall of murky complexion. "Horrida tempestas cœlum contraxit," and, indeed, the poet's metaphor was literally carried out, for the rain-storm seemed to have drawn in the very "brows of heav'n." That "the best laid schemes of men and mice gang aft aglee" was never in hunting history better or more forcibly illustrated than on the present occasion. If there be one single lawn meet in Ireland which presents greater attractions to the vast crowds whom hunting draws within its vortex than another, it is a Castletown gathering on a fine day at this season of the year; for the keen and hard pursuers know full well that behind the park wall of Castletown are magnificent expanses of rich grass land, as well known for their fattening qualities by the dealers in beeves and bullocks as for their scent-retaining faculty, which stretch away towards Meath, Maynooth, and Kilcock, and where the harbours of refuge for shifty or failing fox are few and far between. The grave and reverend signiors who care less now for riding than for the dear delights of coffee-housing, meeting their

friends, and gossiping on everything—from the petty sessions of Little Peddlington to the shifty aspects of the Eastern question, from the elopement of a fox to the elopement of a "fair"—know that the Rialto itself presents no pleasanter "exchange" than the long lime avenue of about a mile, which leads up to the grand Palladian façade of Castletown, while, in the storied and pictured hall of the mansion itself, they will be sure to find congregated together much of the pleasantest of that pleasant social amalgam to which the metropolis and the surrounding shires all add their quotas.

The sinuous Liffey, which here flows in considerable volume, presented to the ancestors of the existing race of Kildare pursuers such irresistible attractions for the rearing of noble houses and the planting and enclosure of wooded pleasaunces, that for several miles round Castletown Park scenery—such a rare feature in bare and treeless Ireland—greets the eye more or less continuously as you hack along from Straffan Bridge. On the occasion of a lawn meet at Castletown, every neighbouring country-house on either side of the Great Southern and Western line overflows with hunting guests. Dublin sends forth her legions of cars and carriages along that well-known road which is flanked by the Liffey on one side, by the strawberry beds (the vineyards of the county) on the other; and many who care little for hunting find ample amusement and pastime in the exhilarating drive backwards and forwards, and seeing the pleasant and bright *cortége* sweeping, as is usually the case, for a half-hour or two round the woodlands and park of Castletown before the fox is fairly forced into the open.

Alas! for the marring of pleasant anticipations! Alas! that upon a night so fair such awful morn should rise! No; it is not a ladies' day, not by any possible construction. It is not a hounds' day, a horses' day, and the chances are that it will not be a foxes' day either, as they have probably been stopped in; so *chef d'œuvres* of Poole, Davis, and Wolmershausen, reserved, per-

haps, for this day, must go back to the limbo of trunks and portmanteaus, carriages must be countermanded; the polychrome woodlands will not echo to the merry ring of ladies' laughter; nor will doughty deeds of derring-do or ridiculous failures have their fair gallery of spectators to-day.

A score or two of semi-frozen pursuers find the way into the hall of Castletown by 10.45, to be warmed and cheered up by the good things which its hospitable owner, Mr. Conolly, purveys for hunting men and women; another score or so crowd into the capacious stables, whose Titanic stone pillars and arched roof remind us that our ancestors had some little regard for their horse friends' comforts. Macintoshes and covert coats are at tremendous premium, and, in the middle of this land tempest—which, after all, is something better than dirty weather at sea, even in a well-found ship, with a good offing—news reaches us somehow that the hounds have gone on, and that the pink-clad posse are drawing the woods at the back of the house. The extra keen rush on through storm and rain; the vacillators, ever a large class, hang about the stables for another ten minutes more—and I cannot call them altogether unwise—turn their horses' heads homewards to fight and run another and less portentously wet day! But what has happened in the meantime? Two foxes have broken away at once from their wooded shelter, and, running together for some distance, have made play in a north-westerly direction. Scent was, of course, low to-day; so, though fine pastures were traversed, the pace was nothing to speak of; and presently a good gorse, known as Cullen's, is passed, and the war-track lies over more grass lands, intersected by smallish and rather blind ditches and greasy banks, which upset not a few. One hard-riding man came down three times till we passed the ruined town of Taghadoe, and near this point our fox (his companion had, I fancy, ere this deserted him) was lost to scent. I believe this fox ultimately found his way to Lara.

Taghadoe Gorse, which somehow now seldom holds a fox, was

next explored, but in vain, nothing more exciting occurring than a "voluntary" summersault of a heavy pursuer, whose horse began plunging and buck-jumping when least expected.

Not a few about this time deserted the thin ranks of pursuit, thinking there was very little of pleasure, profit, or excitement in store for them. The sequel will show that there was, and that "stick to the hounds" is not a much worse legend than "stick to the Baron" proved to turfites a few years back. A long, tedious, and seemingly interminable trot brought us up at last to the gates of Lodge Park; for Lara, at one time savoured in anticipation as the *bonne bouche* of the day, was voted a hopeless draw owing to the tempestuous night. Its owner is now absent abroad, I believe, and it was currently rumoured that a lover of the chase from the land of the Saxon (who has since gone into the ranks of M. F. H.'s) was about to take it, with a view to a season's hunting in Kildare, with Meath and the stag by way of variations. However, the hall was empty to-day, and the well-known figure of Mr. Frederick Henry, at the head of an array of servants standing on his door-steps, and insisting on the practical carrying out of the French maxim, "Remplis ton verre vide, vide ton verre plein, jamais ne laisse ton verre ni vide ni plein," by each follower as he passed by, was all awanting from the day's proceedings. The woods by the Liffey had been explored in all their length, but in vain; when, in a corner near Straffan Bridge, the music of a find greets the listening ear. Then too soon succeeds the worry-worry of a tripod fox, and, following quick on this, a hound gets momentarily caught in a trap. Can these things be in the very centre and focus of foxhunting? *Accidents*, of course, we shall be told —and no one supposes that intentional and declared vulpecidism would be tolerated on soil which has been almost sacred to the fox family for generations. But evil is wrought by want of thought, says the rhyme—and very truly—and no doubt promiscuous rabbit trapping *is* sapping foxhunting to its very foundations, not only directly but indirectly. The lord of the soil or

manor wants his rabbits decimated or improved off the face of his land, contracts with some itinerant professor in the art of trapping, and makes—or thinks he makes—the latter safe and innocuous by binding him under the heaviest penalties to respect fox life, and lay his traps in a certain approved fashion. The trapper, of course, acquiesces; but his motto is "Frappez vite et frappez fort;" his engines are laid by the hundred. Some escape his vigilance, and fall into even worse hands than those of his myrmidons; while if foxes *do* get trapped in those he has set at night for the cony tribe, *tant pis* for the fox. Like Sir John Moore, at Corunna, the latter is buried very silently and secretly, with his martial fur upon him. No one is a bit the wiser, unless the trapper and his men chance to fall out over their beer or whiskey. The tale of rabbits is told, the money is paid, and all goes well, till presently the hounds draw their well-known haunts, and find them either empty, swept and garnished, or only tenanted by a maimed and mutilated specimen of his race. These are some of the *direct* effects of the fatal system; among the *indirect* may be reckoned the dethronement in the minds of men of that divinity which was ever held to hedge the fox. The habit of considering him as *vermin* grows too readily. Say that a gravid vixen has been trapped in spring, and has pined to death, losing her litter of expected cubs, of course. The owner of the park or covert, finding that he has no foxes to present to the M.F.H., and that he cannot speak confidently to friend or foe in the gate, sends to the handiest market for cubs, which are, generally speaking, as inferior to the home-bred and home-reared animal as a jackal is to a lion. The fashion grows, and foxhunting in its best sense languishes. Why, if the current reports be even half true, the destruction of foxes in Kildare is prodigious, considering that foxhunting is the pivot of its social world, and leavens everything there.

Crossing the Dublin road, we come next to Straffan Park, the residence of Major Barton, which has been very happy in producing good foxes when wanted during the last few seasons; but

the woods round the house yield nothing, nor do the river plantations either. The look out seems very blank, as we have drawn beyond the Home Farm, and only one square bit of wood remains for investigation. A rocketer or two appear and disappear, and then comes the long-wished-for tally. He is no craven, the fox—probably an old acquaintance, for he takes to the open at once. The first field is deep plough, and the obstacle out of it —a ditch, with quicks in the opposite bank—empties a lot of saddles. Then comes, after a bank and brook, a road, and a very greasy hairy bank, leading into fine pastures, arrests several ambitious efforts. An old tower is passed, and through the mist we can discern by well-known landmarks that we are sailing on to Rathcoffey, which is now not more than four or five fields off; but a sharp turn to the right sends our fox once more towards Straffan, till, headed probably at a road, he turns once more, and enters Mr. Fortune's farm—and here a long check, the first, occurs. Now, however, Rosebud—the gem perhaps of a beautiful group of sisters—has hit off the line across the road, in, say, the direction of Lara, and once more we are sailing away, over a grand grassy line, till a brook, with a high bank on the far side, arrests and engulfs not a few. Then another long check, and another series of casts, brings us over a road, and we find our trail, leading towards Taghadoe; no more over green fields, but heavy plough, divided by very large fences, and at a crawl, not devoid of grief. We progress on towards Windgates, two or three horses distinguishing themselves by their fine bold fencing—notably a grey of Mr. Blacker's, and a brown colt of Mr. Hanway's; Mr. Robt. Kennedy's son appeared to be following his father on a clever black cob, and if he *did* follow him all through, such black cob is fairly entitled to a diploma as a hunter. Capt. Richard Mansfield was also very conspicuous when the country waxed biggest on his well-bred, wiry-looking chestnut, who distinguished himself greatly in the celebrated Reisk run, which is our Waterloo and Great Wood rolled into one. Mr. Chas. Hamilton, on Home

Ruler, was also seemingly very happily mounted. I heard a shivering pursuer at Straffan, before the last fox was found, express a strong desire for a sharp twenty minutes, with two or three extra large fences to weed out the "polloi." I think he had his heart's desire, though certainly the fences seemed to increase in size towards the last stage of this run; perhaps the slowness of the pace had something to do with the estimate we formed on the subject. I only heard of one horse being much injured by the day's proceedings—a chestnut of Major Lawless's, who will, I fear, be an absentee from the covert side for some time. However, Major L. has a strong stud to draw on, and he needs it.

Last week I recorded some of the features of a fine gallop the Kildare hounds had from Hortlands Gorse. The same country was also the theatre of perhaps the fastest thing Mr. George Brooks's harriers have had for some time—so fast that a field which contained some good elements was fairly distanced, Col. Lyster, I understand, managing to get a nearer view of them as they tore along than his brethren of the craft; and, as I am on the subject, I may state that the Newbridge harriers on the 15th inst. had a wonderfully fast thirty minutes with a Rathascar hare, who led them a loop through the lands of Killashee Old Town and Newlands at really good pace, which gave horses all they wanted, and a wee bit more in some cases; Mr. and Miss O'Kelly—both admirably mounted—seeing the pursuit well all through, while Mr. Coffey, on a grand-stamped chestnut, was never far from them.

An untoward misadventure prevented, my joining the Meath hounds at Trim last week. I am sure, O king—O sovereign *Field*-reading public—you will not feel interest in the recital of my misfortune. *Infandum, regina,* (*non*) *jubes renovare dolorem.* Enough for me to have lost a ride over a peerless country (rather water-sodden just now, however), on a peerless chestnut, without dwelling on the causes which led to it.

Let me now add in lieu of personal observations a few extracts from Meath's archives—a sketch of their doings for some recent days. On the 8th they were at Bengerstown, and the hounds divided in covert, five couple and most of the field going in one direction, while the body of the pack broke in an opposite direction, and had a nice gallop by Ricetown to Mr. Walker's, where their fox got to the ground. In Headstown they found another, and sent him to ground near Castletown, winding up the day with a kill in Arch Hall. On the 9th they were at Dunshaughlin, where they found, and had a ringing run *viâ* Ratoath and Lagore to the poor house, where he got to ground. A run from Killeen to Dunsany was the second chapter. On the 11th they took a fox from Bloomsbury to Ballybeg, and earthed their game in a railway bank. From Allenstown they sent another through Martry towards Charlesfort, but scent failed. From Rathmore there was a nice gallop to the Hill of Ward, and the day wound up with a very enjoyable run from Gillstown, through Newtown and Brady's Farm by Girly, hounds being called off by moonlight as they were running into Athboy Lodge. On the 12th the meet was at Trim station. Newhaggard was full of foxes. One they killed, and ran another to Laracor, and thence towards Tobertinan, when hounds were called off, as the earths were open; a short run from Trimleston closed the day. On the 13th they were in bleak Killallon on the bleakest of days, and ran a fox towards Archerstown; but a wide brook stopped bold and cautious alike, though in different ways, and hounds slipped clean away, and were found by M'Bride near Lakefield—no doubt a very good thing, though unwitnessed.

I understand the United Hunt Club are emerging most successfully from the difficulties inseparable from new ventures and new management. Their hounds have done some very brilliant things already, witness a sketch of their proceedings on Monday, the 8th. Meeting on that day at Bally Edmond, they rang

a fox for some time round the demesne, but forced him at last out of Buckley's Gorse, when he ran at a pace described as "tremendous" to Carrigtwohill, then he turned short and gained Bolton's Plantations. The Hon. Miss Roche was acknowledged *prima donna assoluta* on this occasion, among her "company" being Lord Fermoy, Messrs. Crauford, Gubbins, Coppinger, Uniacke, Hare, Hunt, Bartle, Bowles, Guide, Byrne, Major Dent, Capt. Donelan, and Miss Longfield.

Returning again to the Queen's county, I found they scored a good day's sport on the first from Kilmaroney, Sir A. Weldon's residence. On the 5th they ran a fox from Killine to Moyanna. On the 10th they had a quick find in the pretty gorse covert of Harristown, whence they took their fox through Kyle Hill by Bagswell, on to Foulkscourt, where he got to ground, leaving the pack and horses twenty-eight miles from kennel and stable! On the 12th they had some woodland work in Ballykilcavan, killing their quarry. On Monday, the 15th, they met at Blandsfort, and found foxes abounding in Derryfore; one went off towards Heywood, but the hounds selected a less ambitious one, who got to ground very soon. Cullenagh and Sling had each a representative fox—the latter two—but neither showed much sport. The Sling inhabitant went over the oft-trodden ways of Cremorgan and Coolnabacca, and beat the pack to ground.

A third good day's sport on that tempestuous Saturday! It fell to the lot of less than a score of the Ward Union Hunt to be at the enlargement of Cabinet Minister on that day on Mr. Gortin's lands. His track lay by the Stand House and Fairy House up to the 10-mile bush, across the road, over the strongly-fenced Bush Farm, 30 minutes bringing him to Rathbeggan at best pace. Here a lake intervened, but presently the hounds are streaming on across Black Bull, and thence to Peacockstown, where a capture was effected; six finished well, but the honours of the day belong by consensus, I hear, to Mr. Crawford, a guardsman. Aider and Basilisk, from Lord

Vincent Brooks, Day & Son, Lith.

MR. DIDDLE DE WINK HAVING MET WITH SO MANY ACCIDENTS OUT HUNTING HIS WIFE SENDS THE MONTHLY NURSE TO TAKE CARE OF HIM.

Spencer's kennels, entered well to "stag," and Jem Brindley was splendidly carried on this most trying day on the recent purchase from Mr. E. Morris, whom I hope they call Morris Dancer.

From Wexford a capital hunting run of 1 hour 35 minutes is reported; it began in Horetown Wood, which is a well-known stronghold of foxes, the pack sticking most perseveringly to their game in spite of very moderate scent till they got to Bricketstown, when a fresh fox jumped up in front of them, and darkness put an end to the pursuit after a long harrying.

The Louth record reads in outline as follows: On the 5th they found a mangy vixen somewhat long in tooth at Gormanstown, and killed her after an hour, spent principally in the park. From Knockbrack, a covert made some three years ago by Capt. the Hon. E. Preston, they had a very fast 16 minutes into Westown, the hounds racing clean away from their field. The fox entered the lands just in front of the pack, and 'tis supposed he must have gained sanctuary in the garden. A brace were found in Harbourstown; one was killed, while the second gave a good 35 minutes by Stedalt into Gormanstown, where darkness saved him from further pursuit. On the 11th they found foxes at Platten, where they killed. Another turned up at Keane Glen, who got to ground. A third, from Rosnaree, they could not hunt for want of scent; but from Glenmore they had a lively ring of 35 minutes. On Saturday they were at the Mills of Louth, and found a brace at Drumgarna, but the day was so tempestuous that hounds were sent home.

The interests of coursing forced Mr. Mansfield to make a change in his programme for Tuesday, the 16th, in Kildare; and Dunlavin was substituted for Sallins on that day as a trysting place, so that the votaries of the long tails might have the remainder of the week and the Dunlavin pastures to themselves. A deluging shower came down in bucketfuls between ten and eleven, and those who came to Dunlavin from any distance were fortunate if Cording's macintosh shields warded off the

downpour. As for those who hacked on, they were in a fit state to undertake any amount of water-jumping enterprises, as no immersion could make their condition worse. Ballintaggart Gorse, the first draw, sent out a good fox, who ran across the valley below very fast, and escaped in some burrow or sewer in Rathsallagh. Scent evidently served the dog pack well, for the short distance was done in very good time. Hatfield Gorse, next drawn, furnished a good stout fox, who started with little pressing for Logatrina, glancing at the Bowery as he passed by. At Logatrina he turned sharp back, and was ultimately killed after nearly an hour's hunting: no bad cub, as the authorities seemed to make him. Cryhelp Gorse furnished the second portion of the day's entertainment, and I think to-day's visit was the first paid to this famous fox haunt; at any rate, the hounds hunted their fox most determinedly for fully twenty minutes before he could be induced to leave the enclosure. For the first few fields nothing could be more miserable than the scent there; once a sheltered lane was passed, it improved every moment, and the hounds fairly raced their fox into Copeland's Gorse. Here there was a delay of some four or five minutes, when he is tallied away; pointing his head as if meaning to go to Donard. Presently his line bends back towards Cryhelp, but, leaving the gorse to his left, he speeds on by Tober Moat, and near this point the hounds were stopped, as darkness was coming on; more especially was it necessary to do so, as rather more than half the pack had gone off with a second fox from Copelands in the direction of Tynte Park, and were stopped with difficulty. This upland plateau presented as fine a line of sound grass as could be found anywhere; but the banks were far from being sound, and nothing had a chance of overcoming them successfully but a quick, clever fencer with a leg to spare when the treacherous foothold gave way. The master and Will Freeman, Mr. and Miss Kilbee, and Mr. David Mahoney were among the few who saw the chase successfully from find to finish; but an

English well-bred mare, very fearlessly piloted by her owner (an artilleryman), showed that the talent for bank jumping is not *necessarily* indigenous to Ireland or the principality of Wales, though certainly more often found there, as naturally more generally required. Tumbling was of course the rule among these rotten banks, and the exceptions only proved the authenticity of the rule; among the prone were not a few good horses and not a few good men. Mr. Mansfield deserves the thanks of all the day's pursuers, tumblers and non-tumblers alike, for having resisted a strong appeal, backed by the authority of an ex-M.F.H., to postpone the drawing of the coverts till the following day, owing to the morning downpour.

I alluded in a previous letter to the fine sport Mr. Watson's pack (the Carlow and Island) had been showing. All things considered, the Ballydaw run (which I noticed before in outline) of 1 hour 15 minutes was one of the finest and straightest efforts made by any fox this season, so far at least as my information goes. On the 9th inst. this pack met at Lisnevagh, and, finding at Moorstown, took their fox by Rathdaniel to Lisnevagh, where he was coursed by dogs and lost. Soon after this they had a ring with a cub, and killed him, and ran a third fox from Graney by Beechy Park to Castle Dermot. On the 11th they were at Charlesfort, and went away well with a wild fox over Ballycodden and Slievebuigh, earthing him in Camolin. This run was at fair pace all throughout. On the 13th they took a good fox from Killenagh through Burgage, and so on to the hills, when fog stopped them, and had a run of little interest from Rathellon.

It is only due to Mr. Henry, one of the staunchest supporters of foxhunting, to say that he has not only *taken notice* of, but *punished severely*, the *employés* whose carelessness led to the vulpecidism I have noticed. The precedent is worth anything and I hope sincerely Mr. Henry's example will become a recognised fashion and rule of social obligation.

December 4th, 1875.

The rain it raineth every day.

Since the days of Schoolhood we have become accustomed to talk of this planet of ours as being terraqueous, the emphasis being especially upon the first part of this sonorously compound word; but really, if the present diluvial outpourings continue much longer, the aqueous portion will be fairly entitled to the pride of place in nomenclature, as in substance it really usurps it. Bad as things are in Ireland, I think we may congratulate ourselves upon aqueous exemptions beyond most places in the world, and certainly the valley of the Liffey (and, indeed, all our valleys) has suffered infinitely less in destruction of life, damage to property, and suspension of the affairs of every-day existence, than the Thames valley, to compare great things with small. The rainfall has certainly been abnormally large, and the wettings sustained by individuals, and mainly by pursuers, have been past counting. But, to come to hunting facts, has a field in Kildare been arrested by impassable floods as yet this season? Has a single bridge that we are wont to traverse been carried away, or injured in a single arch? Is the country, though certainly holding in places, as sticky and tenacious as many members of this hunt recollect it within the last ten years? The fact is that we rail at the rain because it most sadly mars our comfort and enjoyment. We hate to be in a state of semi-pulp as to our external casings and envelopings day after day; our horses hate it, our grooms detest it, and as for our valets, abhorrence alone does justice to their view of the recurring watery dispensation; but when we find that five or six weeks ago the springs which fed many a household pump were dry and exhausted—that, save in few places, the field drains and conduits are still sending their tribute to the sea, and that there is little or no back water—we may be sure that, even in a hunting point of view, this long rain period has been of infinite service, not only in creating a sort of reservoir for scent, but in making the hard-baked dry soil fit for

hoof and pastern of hunter. Has not the bard of all time told us that we, ignorant of our good, pray often our own harm, which the wise gods deny us for our good, so find we profit in losing of our prayers? And so it may be with the rain storms of the past fortnight, to which we have so often mentally applied the *jam satis terris* of our old Sapphic friend; unpleasant as they prove now, they may be ultimately the best ministers to our pleasure, even in things venatic.

My theme to-day is of the Kildare hounds at Sallins, and part of the Liffey valley was the scene of the struggles of horses, hounds, and foxes, for I do not think that during the day we were ever much more than two miles from the banks of that much-winding river. "Prodigious!" exclaimed old Dominie Sampson when anything strange struck the retina of his fancy! Prodigious and portentous to our seeming was the fact that we can at length chronicle a fine day, a dry day, and that such a day was a hunting day! Sallins is not a picturesque village by any means, nor by any means interesting, and yet it is approached from the east and west of Ireland by iron ways and water ways. It is an important station on the Great Southern and Western line, and it is also traversed by the Grand Canal. Thus grandeur and greatness are more or less thrust, in different ways, upon this little village of about a score of houses, of which not a few seem devoted to the refreshment of pilgrims and the tempering of the *water* to the thirsty lamb. To-day by eleven it was glorious with resplendent colour, for aneroids and barometers seemed to have inspired many pursuers with the ambition of attending this Kildare function, and most came in honour of the day and the great gathering, in pinks of this season, gorgeous with the yet unsubdued hue of the cochineal. From the Queen's county a few of Mr. Cosby's pursuers mustered to this tryst, among them Mr. Adare and Mr. Hamilton Stubber, both, as usual, admirably mounted. From Newbridge and the Curragh there was a very large influx, though one or two whom one might almost call

habitués of this hunt were not there. Capt. Bates, Major Chilton, and Col. Chaplin represented the 4th Dragoon Guards; and the former seemed none the worst for his shaking fall at Liverpool last week. Just as time is up, the Dublin train, heavily freighted with horse boxes, steams up to the station, bringing among others to the gay scene Sir Michael Hicks Beach—who unbends the over-taut bow of statecraft in the pleasant Kildare pastures,—Capt. J. M'Calmont, Mr. Steel, 12th Lancers, and a host of others, who hurry on to their hunters, as the procession has already begun to move westward along the Grand Canal bank; and, if you stand on the Sallins Bridge, a good coign of vantage, you may see the red and black *cortêge* winding along the banks, with hardly a break or interruption, for more than a mile. There is a fine siding to the towing path, once the aqueduct and viaduct over the Liffey is passed, and one can canter on gaily to the first draw, which is about a quarter of a mile from Landenstown Lock (and Landenstown Lodge Gate), where a number of carriages are constrained to make a halt, as the laneway leading to the gorse of Bellavilla is not an inviting-looking track by any means, if possible for wheels, which I doubt. The gorse itself is partially cut down, but there remains a magnificent expanse of furzy greenery for foxes still standing; a park wall bounds it on the northern side, and over or through this the fox, whose find was at once musically proclaimed, managed to get a very good start of the pack, who were not well on to him for ten minutes after he had "gone away." Once started, he raced over the lawn in front of Mr. Sweetman's house, tried one or two sheltering bits of wood, but, finding no rest, passed on through Firmount—Mr. Hugh Henry's place—and then sped onwards to the broad pastures of Millicent by the banks of the Liffey, which were strongly fenced, but the obstacles were few. In Millicent he made but a short stay, as the covert is not strong or large; and then his track lay across the Sallins Road, over about a mile of unusually wide grass fields, when he bent to

the right, and gained five or ten minutes by dexterously availing himself of an old unroofed farm-house, and then squatting in a quickset hedgerow by the Liffey banks. But we are again in motion, and, riding over a beautiful bight of grass land apparently between the Liffey and the Canal, leaving Sallins to the right, one strong fence occurs *in transitu*, a large double, which seems to serve as a mearing or boundary between two grass farms. We are here entering the broad lands of Castle Size, through the plantations of which our fox ran, then crossed the Clane Road near Blackhall, and made the well-known hill burrow, if haply he might there find a hiding place for his brush. But all here is sealed fast, and the track leads on past Mr. Mills's house, to the Straffan Road, and across it through Mr. Garnett's shrubberies to the grass fields which bound the well-known though now truncated Turnings covert; and soon after this we had to abandon him from want of scent, and in consideration of the numbers out, many of them tied to railway time.

About a couple of miles of trotting brings a large field, though perhaps somewhat smaller than in the forenoon, to a gateway, through which we pass, and, after cantering over a couple or three large grass pastures, we find ourselves on the northern verge of Osberstown Gorse, with Naas *en évidence* on the left, and before us a grand range of seemingly interminable grass lands. The day had been warm, still, and extremely enjoyable, but a cold wind now sprang up, and for nearly forty minutes we had to debate upon the probabilities of the fox, whom the hounds were hunting most cheerily in the gorse, breaking covert, or paying the penalty of his home sickness in the covert itself. Five or six times he made short excursions out, each time to return directly, as if his heart failed him, for he was not perceptibly headed, and the field was orderly to a degree perhaps rare, considering its numbers and composition. At last awa y he goes, and there is no mistake this time, for he cannot return with any safety; but his course is not a happy one for his

pursuers. Over grass fields, 'tis true, and very good riding for a few hundred yards, till we come to a brook very crossable by fording, or jumping, or both, and then a short check; and then *wire*, the omnipotent, stops the way. A gap is soon made or discovered, and again we are sailing onwards, past Mr. Nolan's house and shrubberies; crossing the Newbridge Road, the railway and the Liffey are obstacles in front, and to ride up and down the embankments of the former, and get over a wall and a thick quickset hedge, required something of a hunter's form, and in every case much energy and some objurgation on the part of the riders. The river is high, but not at all dangerously deep, and in a few fields Castle Keely covert is reached; but our youngster dwells not here. He pushes on desperately for a few fields, then turns sharp, so done and lagged that a lad out (and, I hear, a lass also) caught him and detained him for a moment by the brush as he was trying to work up a bank. Who-whoop! one cub the more has gone to his ancestors: a pleasant day's sport, though not decisive, or with any brilliant passages, but much enjoyed by a great many. There was a great amount of jumping, and comparatively little of grief; but the horse of a lady—a fine huntress—had the misfortune to kick a well-known and popular member of this hunt, and I believe hurt him considerably. I saw another lady's horse too free by far with her heels. Such mounts put ladies in painful predicaments at times—not to speak of the wounded. Mr. Percy La Touche had the misfortune to cut a promising young hunter early in the day, but Mr. Love, the well-known purveyor of hunters to the United Kingdom (for his horses are as well known in Scotland and England as in the Emerald Island) proved the good Samaritan on this occasion, furnishing him with a neat brown horse, whom he sent along with his usual *aplomb*.

The next day alternated between storms of wind and rain, but the following Saturday was clear, crisp, and bracing. The blue vault of a serene heaven seemed miles higher than of recent

days, while the horizon had expanded wonderfully, and every object within it presented itself clear and sharply defined to the eye as it ranged round. Rathcoole, a rather grimy village some nine or ten miles from Dublin as you journey to Naas, was the meeting place of the Kildare hounds and their followers, whose name to-day might be legion, for they were many. Lord Cloncurry's waggonette brought a large party from the neighbouring Lyons, among them the Hon. Mr. Plunkett, from Meath's green pastures. Lord Clonmell's carriage was also fairly freighted; so were Mr. Conolly's and the Hon. Mrs. Barton's. The Dublin garrison sent forth a cloud of skirmishers, drawn principally from the 4th Dragoon Guards—whose colonel was, as is his wont, beautifully mounted on Shiner—the Inniskillings, the Royal Artillery, and the Guards. Gen. Irwin rode that good chestnut mare I recollect noticing on the opening meet of these hounds, while his daughter, Miss Irwin, seemed charmingly mounted on a grey. Dublin sent a very strong force of cavalry to the scene of action, and, *au reste*, nearly all the *habitués* of Kildare meets were punctual to the tryst and the hour. It was a cheering bright day, so nobody seemed to mind the cold, though horses' coats and men's fingers acknowledged sensibly the frigid influence; and here somebody made or repeated *the* joke of the morning and the place, which I, too, venture to repeat. Compare positive "Rathcoole." Give it up, eh? Well, comparative—*Rather cooler!* which reminded one of the celebrated House of Commons joke (spoon, spooner, etc.) now trite and stale. But we are on the move through a miry lane, wherein snowy leathers emerge almost unrecognisable—certainly much spotted,—then a gallop over some beautiful pasture land; and passing by Castle Bagot Gorse, now cut down, we come to the house and shrubberies whence so many good foxes emerged last season and the previous one. They are empty now, and no wonder, for the covert is light, and in the clear air the ring of horses may be heard for a long distance.

The next visit is to some straggling gorse near the 12th Lock—a nice brown mare, ridden, I believe, by the Hon. Mr. Greville, getting a severe kick *en route.* This, too, is vacant, though there is hound music heard, for a fox has recently left it, warned probably by a quick ear of the hostilely approaching cavalcade. The third try breaks the spell of blankness. It is at a nice new gorse known as Miss Gould's (the landlady), which Sir Edward Kennedy, I believe, established in the last year of his presidency; it held two, if not three, to-day, and two ran together over a nice line for a bit, when they diverged, separating the pack; one was sent to earth in a sewer somewhere near the Dublin Road, which seemed a damp sort of shelter for so dainty an animal; the other seemed pointing for Lyons; but, getting on the New Castle Road, which was, I fancy, considerably foiled, he caused a few moments of delay and hesitation. Pace and scent had gone together very harmoniously up to this point, and Major the Hon. E. Lawless and Col. Sarsfield Green, R.H.A., had been going along very merrily in front, and evidently in expectation of "a good thing." Now the line leads us on again very cheerily, as if for Castle Bagot, and over a widish country, but the fox turns presently to the right, and in a few minutes succumbs to the pack near the parsonage of New Castle.

The next scene is at Johnstown Kennedy, where several foxes are on foot, and one, forced outside the park, seemed to promise one of the old fast things to *Kilteel;* but no, bless him! there he is back again! A second showed equal sagacity, at the expense of his reputation for dash. By this time the vast field had somewhat dwindled in proportion—I dare say a good many delayed over the good things spread out liberally at Sir Edward Kennedy's hospitable board; certainly the numbers were less alarmingly great by the time we were gathered together outside the wall of Boston Gorse. There's a chorus! There's a crash! The dog pack are in voice to-day, spite of the frosty air. "Up the middle and down again," and presently, at the

upper or hilly end of the covert, emerges leisurely and calmly, as if fully master of the situation, and not one whit flurried, a beautiful brown fox, white-tagged as to the brush, and every hair seemingly in its place. His course is up the opposite grassy hill slopes; and with a couple of fences, one a nice low wall, and a half-mile at speed, we find ourselves on top, overlooking a beautiful bit of vale, perhaps a trifle holding. In a moment we are descending more slowly corresponding slopes, then crossing the road, with the valley before us, when a painful pause occurs; but a happy cast forward reveals to us that a large flock of flabbergasted and perturbed sheep has completely obliterated scent. In a moment it is all right again! A big, safe double leads us into the happy valley, which somebody had been saying was cut out by nature and art for a steeplechase course; the line leads us right across it. Then over a road, and we are presently entering Bishopscourt Park (Lord Clonmell's), and skirting the gorse, from which I believe we forced one fox to emerge, past the house and up towards Oughterard Hill, near which point I think the hounds were called off. Had it not been for the interruption caused by the flock of sheep, this would probably have been a very fast gallop; as it was, no one who remained out to see the last scene of the day's proceedings had any cause to regret it. The finish was not far from the red-coat race-course of last year, which is, I hear, to be soon enlivened by a series of matches between popular members of the Kildare Hunt, light and heavy, who have expressed strong opinions as to the merits and capacities of their hunters, and mean to test their correctness. One has already come off this year over Halverstown racecourse, but it proved a one-sided affair from start to finish.

On Monday, the 22nd, this pack were awaiting their followers in the hill village of Ballymore Eustace, where the Liffey, from a mountain torrent rushing through wild gorges and deep wooded ravines, first assumes the dignified proportions and majestic

flow of a river. A fairer day never dawned on this season. After the wind storms and the rain storms, the hush and lull of all elemental strife, to-day seemed a magical transition. The air was fresh, though warm, and no gaudy sun shone forth in mockery of scent aspirations. Such a day we rejoice in sometimes in the little summer of St. Luke—though why he had a summer to himself I never could ascertain—but very rarely on the threshold of the last month of the year! Why such genial atmospheric invitations were not more cordially responded to by a grateful Kildare or metropolitan public, passes my comprehension; but a smaller field I do not ever remember in a tryst so near Naas, Sallins, and even, comparatively speaking, to Dublin. A few officers of the Queen's Bays, a staff man or two, the Earl of Clonmell, Mr. W. Forbes, Major Lawless, Mr. F. Tynte, Mr. W. Kennedy, Sir J. Higginson, Mr. Percy La Touche, Capt. Mansfield, a few carriages, and eight or ten ladies riding, formed the chief elements of the by comparison attenuated *cortége*—for the diminution of which, I heard, the Naas cattle fair was mainly responsible; for be it clearly understood that Ireland, from a mixed agricultural country is fast becoming a bovine Bœotia. Horses once formed a staple in all country fairs; now, year after year, they are becoming rarer in number, and, I think, somewhat inferior in quality. Cattle are now our speciality, and, as these are parlous times with the cattle export trade, the absence of many pursuers may be thus accounted for. Those who came had a pleasant morning spent in very beautiful scenery, which the presence of hounds and red-coats lit up with bright colour and life. After drawing Stonebrook Gorse blank, some time was spent in exploring the wooded banks of the river on either side, from Ballymore Bridge to Harristown, but with no fox result. Crossing the Dunlavin Road, we next cantered through Sallymount demesne, where the coverts consist mainly of plantations and shrubberies, and whence, on a still day like this, an old fox would be sure to break almost instantane-

ously; and so it fortuned, the hounds slipping as quick as thought across Mr. Gaussen's fields (Newtown Villa), before the majority were at all aware that there had been a find—Mr. Percy La Touche on a grey cob mare, and Will Freeman, the huntsman, being nearer than most to the pack as they flew across the Kilcullen Road, and thence into Gilltown Park, pointing for the gorse covert, which occupies a corner by the south-eastern angle of the park wall. The fox, however, did not enter this gorse snuggery, but, jumping the park wall by Mile Mill, passed the Yellow Bog Church and got into some tillage fields, where the fine scent of the pasture no longer served the hounds, and tailed off their followers. From this point it was a potter, and, under the brow of Old Kilcullen Hill, he got to ground in a bank or burrow.

Thence we returned by another way to Gilltown Park to try the gorse, though there was no slight probability that the *tintamarre* of hounds and horses galloping near it a few moments previously, would have been a signal for the tenants to seek their safety in rapid flight from the dangerous vicinity. However, a minute or two solved the problem most agreeably in hound music, and presently a yell from the watchman at the corner sends the field stampeding for the upper lodge gate; but the coast was not clear, and our fox dodges back. Two more ineffectual efforts follow; but he is headed everywhere, and at last falls a prey inside one of the skirting plantations. While the pack are *en attente* for their fox cutlets, news arrives of a second having gone away over the line which his predecessor would probably have selected had he been permitted to do so; and again we are in pursuit, over a fine bit of vale, but so effectually stopped by wire and water that very few managed to find safe paths for their hunters, and the great majority had to come to the nearest road. The fox meanwhile had a capital start, and, having got leisurely as far as the Yellow Bog Church, he made it his pivot, and set his mask straight again for home; and I believe he ultimately won his

way to Major Borrowes's happy gorse, after a chevy through part of the park. The eastern hills were all flecked with snow to-day. Is this a prelude to the hard winter which the French seers are predicting for us, and which the enormous influx of northern birds seems to confirm in some measure?

Among the hunting accidents of the young season, a broken shoulder and sundry other contusions sustained in Kent last week by Capt. R. Moore, of the 12th Lancers, will rob Kildare of one of its hardest, straightest, and best-mounted light-weights. Lord Waterford's recovery from his crumpling fall is a matter of much rejoicing everywhere, but especially in the south-east, where the Curraghmore and Kilkenny packs claim his constant presence.

Among the unpleasant incidents which have ruffled the smooth and serene surface of the hunting season so far in Ireland, is the practice (if it has become a practice) of hunting bagged foxes in a county which is not only dedicated to the more legitimate sport, but which has also peculiar hunting privileges of another sort which ought to satisfy the most voracious appetites for hard riding. A moment's reflection will, I think, suffice to show the inexpediency, to use mild language, of encouraging such a burlesque and mimicry of the real pastime—the royal sport. A bagman *may* run well, but as a matter of fact he rarely does so; but, even conceding that a grand pursuit is the result—better, straighter, faster than any run of the week—is it worth the offence which the M.F.H. must naturally feel at such an infringement of his "privilege," the resentment of the occupiers over whose lands the illegitimate stampede may lead, and the ugly questions and very crooked answers which the derivation of the tenant of the sack must provoke?

The Ward Union men had a bit of wild deer hunting last Thursday, which was quite a parallel to Mr. Bissett's best pursuits, plus a strongly fenced and well watered line of country. The quarry, a truant red hind, was pursued from Killeen Woods

by Helper, Clownstown, and Corbalton to Ballymadeen, where she was taken, after a chase of 1 hour 15 minutes, during which some ten miles were traversed.

On the 23rd the Kildare hounds rendezvoused at Eagle Hill, so called, on the *lucus* principle, because hills and eagles are essentially absent from the surroundings. There was a very large field out to meet them. Martinstown, as usual, was full of foxes, but none gave any sport. Barn Hill sent forth a good sort of fox, who, however, got to ground very soon, though while about it he travelled at great speed, and over some difficult country, for ten or twelve minutes. The Curragh Gorse held some three or four, and one dashed away in the direction of Athgarvan Bridge without any pressing whatever; he too got to ground incontinently in Mr. Gannon's farm. A second was killed close to the cemetery of the Curragh, and I fancy the third was sent to ground close by. Col. and Mrs. Forbes's lawn was soon filled with hungry and thirsty souls, and if a toast was proposed or silently quaffed, it might have taken the form of "Here's to better and older foxes, and surer stopping!"

I believe earth-stopping has much exercised the hunting mind of Meath lately. Nevertheless, sport has been continuously good there, foxes plenty, and every now and then something really brilliant has turned up. Drewstown occupied them on the 18th, but foxes there were too numerous for sport, and a sharp burst in the evening towards Drewstown from Delany's Covert was the only good thing that day. On the 19th they were at Scariff Bridge, and scored a good thing towards night—five miles by Kildalkey church, and the hounds whipped off by Trimleston owing to the darkness.

On the 20th they were at Crossakiel. At Clonabraney the number of foxes on foot caused the hounds to divide, the master and the majority going off with 9½ couple through Lakefield and Galmoystown into Crosskeys covert, when there was a short check; but presently the fox took them right into Loughcrew,

where they stopped the half pack, and returning to Clonabraney, found that M'Bride and his whips had marked their fox to ground.

Kilgar, Mr. S. Rennell's Gorse, was the evening draw, and a most thoroughly successful one, the Kilgar fox taking them first a ring towards Westmeath, then racing away through Lakefield and Galmoystown, into Loughcrew again, 42 minutes of beautiful galloping, then a kill in the open, 1 hour and 3 minutes from the find. Mr. Waller has had a hard time of it recently, as during M'Bride's illness he hunted the hounds five days a week himself, and the weather, as we all know, *was* somewhat trying. M'Bride, however, is himself again once more. The best things I have heard of from Western Meath are 20 minutes very fast from Mosstown, ending in a kill in the open; and 45 minutes and a kill in the open from Crieve, after a fast scurry through Limestown, and nearly as far as Glencara, and 30 minutes from Glasson to ground.

From Kilkenny comes the pleasing burden of good scent, lots of foxes, and hounds in fine hunting trim—witness the following episodes, which I am obliged to curtail; and in Wexford Mr. Beatty has been equally successful. On the 15th they were at Kilfane, the park of Sir Richard Power, and had a long ring from there, the hounds being stopped when they changed foxes. From Summerhill they had a fine hunting run of 1 hour and 40 minutes to ground, the chief points being Mount Juliet (Lord Carrick's), Thomastown, and Inistiogue village. On the 17th, meeting at Newmarket, they drew the famous Killeen Gorse, from which a fox issued forth at the first summons, pointing for Kiltorken; but, much pressed, he turned at Castlebawny, thence towards Knockbrack, then by a sharp turn to Mullinavat, eventually getting into Killeen covert after such a 55 minutes as men seldom enjoy at this season, for there was only one slight pause, and the hounds, who had much the best of it, were never cast from find to finish. On the 19th they met at Ballyragget, and had a good ring of 20

minutes from Lennon's, and a second run from Lord Ormonde's covert of Dunmore Park, a well-known stronghold of foxes. On the 22nd, meeting at Thomastown, they found three foxes in the wood of Grennan, and hunted one to Coolmore, when he crossed the river. From Frank's Plantations they had a capital 45 minutes over a stone wall line, which passed by Knocktopher, Ballyconray, Coolnahan, and ended in Kiltorken, which I believe is in the Curraghmore territory, and hence earths were open. A lady, I am told, rode this fine run in the first flight all through. From Cork (the United Hunt) the burden is equally pleasing.

December 11th, 1875.

Ho, lictor, clear the way!
The knights will ride, and some will slide,
To Larracor this day;
And there we'll view the collars of blue
In all their bright array.

Larracor, in Meath's happy pastures, is a name associated with the most brilliant hunting passages in the proud archives of that paradise for hunting men, and hunting women too. Its foxes have a traditional reputation for stoutness and dash which they rarely belie, and not a few of the encircling obstacles (particularly on one side of the gorse) will be long treasured in the memories of pursuers —even when, like our late viceroy, Lord Spencer, they are (or have been) relegated to the busier and more peopled scenes in the shires —with mingled associations of pride, regret, and perchance of self-reproach. The man whose good hunter has carried him, for instance, to the top of that large-looming double, plastered over with the recently shored-up mud, *en route* to Rockfield, may feel assured that he has a good sort of resolute hunter under him. Those whose gees chested it, blundered, or refused it altogether,

may mingle with objurgations against "that roan brute," or that magnificent blood-like bay whose 600-guinea Piccadilly reputation failed him on that trying occasion, some useful bits of reflection: Well, I had no business to go at that particular spot because three others got over safely before me, destroying the dubious taking-off in doing so! Why did I ask Baccarat for a lead, when I know that he always makes his horse refuse an over-big place till luncheon has restrung the slackened nervous system? Why did I try to steady "The Banker" when he had picked his own place half a field off, and was only mad to be over? But Larracor has even higher traditions and memories than those of the chase; for it was here that one of Ireland's greatest if most bizarre geniuses long lived, moved, and had his eccentric being! Here, in these sequestered greeneries, no doubt were nurtured many of those strange and grotesque imaginings which fill us still with wonder and pleasure—wonder at the power, pleasure at the brightness of the fancy which irradiate Dean Swift's lighter prolusions! Larracor to every Irish patriot, be he Liberal, Tory, or Home Ruler, should be a pilgrim's shrine. These are after thoughts! On the early morning of the 26th of November, the question—not the burning, blazing, but the marrow-chilling question—of the day was, "Can we hunt?" for, as the curtains were drawn and the blinds pulled up, that ominous flood of white light, so unusual at this season, filled the whole room! Of course Monsieur Narcisse, the valet, shakes his head, and makes the two or three inches of snow half a foot. Snaffle, when summoned, of course casts his vote on the opposition side. "Why, sir, it's freezing hard, and you know Brown Stout has only just got over that bad attack of distemper, and Pendragon has had linseed jelly for the last week; and those are the only two you could ride to-day; besides, I've sent the others a breather up Pineapple Hill this morning! It will require decision to get your own leathers and your own horses. As for the tub, that rests with yourself. Probably, after it you will be more master of your men and the situation."

For my own part, my tent on the night of the 25th was pitched not very far from the extreme verge of those Titanic shadows projected by the Dublin and Wicklow hills, and they had been hoary with snow of some depth evidently for the last day or two; but I had sent on my hunter—or, if you will, the horse I hunt (humility is before honour)—to a stable some twelve or fifteen miles on the road to this popular trysting spot the day before; and when you send on, methinks nothing short of an earthquake should prevent your following after, as the Douglas did when he threw the silver heart into the thickest of the *mêlée.* The first few miles were very, very wintry—the bushes laden with snow; the birds, the rooks especially, so subdued by the cold that you could almost hit them with your whip; green and golden plover circling about in quest of soft spots for feeding; and above you an atmosphere heavily snow-laden. Then the *mauvais pas* at the railway bridge, the long *glissade* in another place, and the *mer de glace* in a third, and, worse than all, the croakings of the interrogated. It required some faith in the cosy theory of the Gulf Stream and the warm tears of *Hibernia plorans* to make one persevere; but once that fine basin which is bounded by the two main lines of railway in Ireland—the Midland and the Great Southern and Western—is entered, all doubts and fears vanish incontinently, for soft snow and slush replace the hard grinding surface, and the air is much warmer. Kilcock once passed by a few hundred yards on the north side, and a small bridge over a tiny river crossed, you are in Kildare no longer, but in Meath; and if the sun would shine out, you would have a grand hunting landscape of seemingly interminable grass fields, undulating very gently, presented to your eye. After a few miles you will come to a pair of quaintly castellated little houses on either side of the road, roofed as if in imitation of the zinc coverings to be seen in some of the Swiss cantons, and in a quarter of a mile more you will have entered the fine park of Summerhill (Lord Langford's) by a mathematically straight approach. The house itself is a fine specimen of the Italian

school of mansions which were in vogue in Ireland some century and a half back, and is on a fine elevation; but *Summerhill*—what a misnomer! It reminds one of Theodore Hook's *jeu d'esprit* on Mr. Winter's name (a sheriff, I think):

Though his name may be *Winter*, his proceedings are *summary*.

A few miles further brings you to the little village and church of Larracor; but, alas! I learnt for the first time that the celebrated gorse was cut down last year, so some of the day's romance is gone at once. But there is a goodly gathering, and the hour, 11.30, has been made easy to suit the railway people, specially the metropolitans. It is far from a monster field, and looks very small in comparison with a popular Kildare gathering. Quality, however, is more represented than quantity, and there is a singular absence of that "mixed multitude" who come to meets from most varying motives. The M.F.H., Mr. Waller, looks none the worse for his arduous and watery experiences of the last few weeks—hunting the hounds five days a week himself *sans relache*, and in such weather! He is mounted on a clever-looking bay (a capital performer), much over his weight, as it well may be, for Mr. Waller might ride for the Derby without much punishment, I fancy. Among the heavy weights, very conspicuous are Mr. Anthony Allen, of Ward Union and Kildare fame; Mr. Brown, Capt. Kearney, Mr. Campbell, Capt. Tuthill, Mr. H. Johnson, of Elm Grove (always apparently well mounted). Mr. Macneil is on his well-known dark grey, and Mr. Fowler rides a smart bay, which is sure to be good if long in his hands. Lord Langford is on a nice lengthy bay horse, a grandson of West Australian; and, if I recollect right, Messrs. Murphy, Leonard, and Lynch ride very nice horses. The Hon. Harry Bourke has a very taking and symmetrical bay under him, Col. Forster is on an old favourite, Capt. C. Ponsonby rides a strong iron-grey, and Mr. W. Butler is on a celebrity I hear; while Capt. Trotter and Mr. Kearsly (5th Dragoon Guards) are certainly not the worst mounted men out.

Col. Lyster, V.C., pilots Miss Sartoris; Capt. Davis does the same office for Mrs. Davis. I have left out not a few names, for which a blundering memory must be my excuse.

A word about the first glance at the pack—the first impression impressed. They were always a most effective and killing pack; now they are all that, with good looks, condition, and evenness in colour to boot. M'Bride may well be proud of them, and they have the most unbounded faith in him. It was a real pleasure to see him again in his old form, and not a bit seemingly the worse for his long and severe illness. So much for the *mise en scène*, or rather one or two aspects of it as they recur.

Larracor being truncated, some coverts near were tried, but nothing turned up till we reached Moneymore, a covert belonging, I hear, to Mr. Despard, who was out, and seemingly right well-mounted on a strong well-bred grey horse. Thence a fox emerged, and was followed (not driven by any means) over a line of country hardly typical of Meath into Tobertinan, Mr. M'Evoy's demesne, where I think he was lost or got to ground. Nothing noteworthy occurred in this slow march, save the intervention of a stream which was more or less treacherous. Col. Lyster made about the best crossing, and got well away with the hounds in consequence. Straney Vicarage now passed, and Rathmolyon Village *left* on the hand of the same name (left), we now enter Mr. Fowler's lands of Rainestown, and, after crossing a few nice galloping fields, we are presently brought up by the well-enclosed bit of gorse, known apparently as Fowler's Gorse or Rainestown Gorse. It seems extensive, and fills one side of a small hill entirely. Silence reigns for some ten minutes or so till we come to the eastern slope, and then the whole pack becomes vocal; another ten minutes of busy hustling in covert, and then we are galloping up a sharp hillock, and facing large grass pastures towards Enfield or Kilcock. I should have stated that between the conclusion of the first fox episode and this draw there had been a very heavy fall of continuous snow, which had cleared the air much, and

evidently improved scent. The whips have turned a few couple of hounds, who were busy with a second fox in the gorse, on to the main pack, and for about a mile we are galloping gaily over grass. Then comes a road; a moment's hesitation, then the line is resumed over a few ploughed or fallow fields, at slower pace. Then comes another road, but no more pausing, and, after getting over a nasty narrow bank with a widish gripe, which Miss Sartoris's horse jumped in a most talented manner, we are once more speeding away at very good pace over fine old grass lands, till we reach the boundaries of Ryndville. One part of the field, with M'Bride for pilot, I think, kept to the right. How they fared I know not; but our division were presently confronted by a huge double, which I hold no sane or sensible horse could jump; two or three try and turn back. Capt. Trotter gets into the wide dry ditch, and forces his grey up the steep bank (with a scramble and fall of course). A less awsome place was found presently near a plantation, and over this most of the field led, scrambled with, or rode their horses; among the latter was Miss Sartoris! One or two more galloping grass fields, and we are in the demesne of Ryndville (one of those happy places where pheasants apparently abound, and yet do not extrude foxes), and here, as a Kildare covert, the earths were open. After this very pleasant gallop of nearly five miles, and part of it at a most animated pace, snow fell again thickly. Some talked of going on to draw Summerhill; for my own part, having some sixteen miles or more in front of me, and very little of daylight remaining, I bade the pack and their followers a reluctant good-night, and I think not a few did likewise, for many had very long rides to their firesides that night. May we parody Whyte Melville's well-known lines?—

Rainestown, that we all remember,
  And the deep-mouth'd hounds,
How they pressed, how none forsook it,
  In that brilliant hour, etc.,

albeit our hour was only a half-portion, and the flooded Stour in front of us was only the Grand Canal. I believe I am correct in stating that not a few Kildare men were prevented from "assisting" at this pleasant meeting by the thought that hunting was improbable, if not quite impossible, under the circumstances. I recognised one of the best hunters returning early in the day, his owner not having turned *up* or turned *out*. 27th, more snow! I fear the birdcatchers in St. Giles's, who minister to the merciless Moloch of Fashion, will have a royal time of it among the poor tame famished little robins, wrens, and warblers of our woods! Cannot ladies be content with the plumage of game birds or birds of prey? Would it not be nobler, if not more emotional, if Lady Clare Vere de Vere would only wear feathers of birds shot by Algy and Gussy, instead of flaunting on her thoughtless lovely head the quarries of Bill Sykes and his peers?

I think I omitted in my last bundle of notes to mention a fair day's sport which the Meath hounds had on Saturday, the 22nd, when their meet was Beau Parc. The first two foxes went off from Beau Parc, past Fenagh, and over the banks of the Boyne towards Slane Bridge; but scent was dead against hunting, so this pair was abandoned between Slane Bridge and Rossmore. They then trotted off to Somerville, and presently a fox was viewed away in front of the pack, but so low was scent they could make nothing of him. The next move was made to Walshe's Furze, a patch of gorse, about a mile from Somerville, and from it a very sporting fox issued, taking his first point for Knockemora Wood. Scent was now most serving, so onward he was driven towards Stokes Gorse; but at this point he turned and ran straight to Corballis, where he got to ground. Some five miles were covered in thirty-five minutes.

I find I also omitted (perforce) the due chronicle of a very fine day's sport in Wexford. Let me briefly repair the *lapsus*. The date was also the 22nd, and the meet of this pack was at Wilton Castle, the fine park of Col. Alcock. Foxes abounded here, but

of scent wherewithal to hunt them a very scant allowance; so one was sent out as far as Allen Rue Wood, and back again without further result. The Master's covert, some two miles distant, was the next venture. It was drawn now for the first time this season, and, contrary to expectation, and beyond hope, a sporting fox broke away for Castleboro' just as the hounds entered it. Being close to him, scent proved friendly, and the pace for these five miles was very good, as was the line of country traversed. Fresh foxes kept cropping up in Lord Carew's woodlands, and the scent in covert died away; so, to remedy this state of things, Mr. Beatty led the pack back to the same covert, which they reached at three o'clock P.M. By ten minutes past they were streaming away again at great pace over another good line of country towards Ballinavarry. The fox did not enter the covert, but raced away over the large grass fields by Rosdroit, over Moneymore Hill, by Keating's Gorse, Kiltea, and into Killoughran, a very thick covert. Time up to this was made forty-five minutes, and there had been no check or hesitation. Through the covert they forced her, and at four o'clock marked her to ground under an old hazel stump, which hardly concealed her. The temptation to drag her out was very strong, and the pack well deserved her; but mercy prevailed. Half the run was seen by a single pursuer only, though all tried their best to catch the flying pack, no one trying harder than a lady on a white horse.

Harking back to the Meath hounds on the 23rd, they were at Ratoath, which, for the benefit of those not well versed in Irish hunting topography, I may state is a village in the cream of the Ward Union hunting grounds. In the covert there they found three foxes, and took one towards the Fairy House, but he got to ground. They had a short ring with another; but an over-zealous keeper let him into the earths. Dunshaughlin produced a fox, who, however, showed no sport to speak of, and the Gerrardstown fox did nothing but run backwards and forwards to Killeen till night set in.

Thursday, the 25th, was the beginning of the snow period, and showers of snowflakes were in the air constantly. The proceedings were not exciting—a short run from Rockfield to Loyd, when the fox got into a burrow. A fox chopped in Balbrath, another taken to Drewstown, and some slow hunting round Boltown, and thence in the direction of Miltown, was about the sum total.

In Kildare this same day was spent in the Athy country, the meeting point being Bert, Lord Seaton's residence, and here, as in his cousin's park of Bishopscourt, foxes have the best of friends and patrons. Hounds find these low peaty lands capital training grounds, as scent often lies well on their damp surface; for the average pursuer they have no charms. Finding a fox in Sawyer's Wood Gorse, they hunted him gaily to Capt. Paget Butler's lands, through the old covert of Geraldine to Foxhill, when he was headed back to Blackwood, and thence on to Bogland, when the hounds were stopped. The afternoon's sport was of a livelier hue, as a good fox issued from The Moat, passed Inch Castle and Narraghmore, and eventually got back to his starting point.

On Saturday, the 27th, they were due at Straffan Bridge, a very enticing fixture, and one which generally draws a goodly field of pursuers. The surrounding country is all vale, and, having recently been in a state of semi-flood, the snow which fell copiously on Friday night was very soon melted and absorbed. Not so at the kennels. There the snow lay thick and hard, and there were several bits on the road thence to Straffan all but impassable. Will Freeman set out with his pack, but was forced to turn back; so the meet was like "Hamlet" *sans* the Prince. Under these circumstances the master telegraphed to the kennels imperatively, and the pack and staff, having walked and slided part of the way, arrived in time to meet a very thinned field, and to draw Major Barton's riverain gorse, a new one. It held a good sharp fox, who issued out promptly and ran at good pace, scent being very warm, towards Turnings, when he set his mask for Straffan, and won his way back to Major Barton's old covert. I

hear the last two miles of this gallop was witnessed by two horsemen only—" the foremost horse*men* rode alone." All trace, save in high latitudes, of the snowfall having disappeared by Monday evening, and the weather apparently boding no more mischief to hunting, save in rain, arrangements were once more made by the large circle who follow this pack persistently. Telegraph wires were worked, and the post-office clerks kept busy in transmitting orders and counter-orders for Tuesday's operations, when, at or about 7 A.M. of the 30th, a continuous snowfall once more arrested the tide in the affairs of men and horses.

I alluded in a recent letter to the enterprise, liberality, and judgment by which the committee of the United Hunt Club (county Cork) had overcome the difficulties inseparable from all new undertakings, more especially the management of an extensive fox-hunting country, and the bringing of rival, and perhaps sometimes clashing, interests into the concord of harmony and combined effect. Hitherto uninterrupted success has marked their progress, and weather, fields, and foxes have combined somehow to make every day's proceedings more or less of a triumph—at any rate, a success. For the benefit of those who are not " posted up " in the hunting history of this part of Cork, I may briefly mention here that Lord Shannon, who now so happily presides over the Vale of White Horse Territory, hunted this country with varied success for many years up to March last, when he resigned the horn of office—led, if I mistake not, to take this step by the very negative and luke-warm support he met in some quarters where he had anticipated more cordial and energetic co-operation. Be that as it may, the testimony to the unsparing and unceasing efforts he made to keep the country up to a high standard, and the creditable and liberal style in which he turned out his hounds and hunted the country, is most abundant. To the latter I can add my own burden of evidence, though unfortunate in the selection of the occasion of my visit. When he gave up the country Lord Shannon sold his two packs separately, the Duhallow Hunt securing the

dogs, the United Hunt the bitches; and if Lord S. wanted a testimonial to his efficiency as an M.F.H., he might take up the parable of the great architect and say, "Si quæris monumentum, circumspice." The doings of the latter body are my theme just now. They were supposed to have been very dearly bought by the committee at the time; but, like all first-class things, they have, in the opinion of their followers, turned out a rare bargain after all! Mason, who was Mr. Cosby's huntsman for some years, hunts them; Mr. Thomas Gubbins is the acting master; while in the kennel department he is aided by the long experience of Mr. R. Uniacke, for many years M.F.H. of the old Union pack in this county.

I noticed one brilliant day enjoyed by the followers of this pack (Nov. 8) some time ago. On the 19th they were at Riverstown, and were met by a very large field, conspicuous among the arrivals being the coach of the 7th Dragoons, who support this hunt and the Muskerry, I am told, in true soldierly style. Passing over three or four hours spent in covert hunting through Morrison's and Justice's glens with little result, a move was made to Rennisolough, though not till second horses were wished for, if not absolutely wanted. A good fox from this place took the field very quickly into the open, and for five miles it was a case of heads up, sterns down, till Carrigtwohill Rock was reached, when there was a slight pause; then across the metals, through Woodstock, and over the large grass pastures by Hagmount, till, at dusk, the hounds were taken off at Wakehem's Glen.

On the 22nd at Carduggan, and on the 24th at Bilberry, there was plenty of hunting, but perhaps nothing so decisive as on the 26th, when they met at Foata Gate, and, finding at Baiz's covert, ran by Carrigtwohill Rock to Wakehem's Glen, and on to Rock Grove—no one, I hear, being near the pack from the Glen to the finish save the master and whip. I may add that the show of foxes this season has, I am informed, never been surpassed in the memory of that mythical personage the oldest foxhunter, or, what

is equally valid perhaps, in the recollection of the many mediævals.

The 29th of November illustrates the uncertainty, this time glorious, of foxhunting in Wexford and everywhere else. The morning was as unlike hunting as can be imagined, and the first fine gorse drawn, Oulard, gave no fox. Dranagh, the second, was tenanted apparently by two foxes, but scent was not very serving in covert. Presently the master's holloa and horn got the bitch pack together and close to a good fox, who went off towards Ballynure across the bottom, by Garryduff, and then, selecting a capital line, passed Cloree and round by Solsboro', which he traversed from end to end. Thence over Ballinabarna to the Oak Copse, when he turned to get back to Solsboro', but was pulled down after a fine pursuit of 1 hour 20 minutes—35 minutes up to the first check, which was a momentary affair, and from Solsboro' the hounds hunted without assistance, and altogether in a cluster.

The week has been illustrated by the presentation of two beautiful works of art to the Marquis and Marchioness of Waterford from the tenantry on his estates, and the members and friends of the Curraghmore Hunt, Lord Bessborough enacting the part of Mercurius or chief speaker for the latter body corporate.

Turning to the Queen's county, I find Mr. Cosby scored a good long hunting run on that bitter cold Saturday, the 27th, to which I have so often alluded in this bundle of jottings, but which seems to have been a red-letter day in England as well—at any rate, with the Pytchley hounds. The Queen's county hounds met that day at Spink Cross Roads, and soon found a fox in Moyadd who went away, not much pressed, through Cooper's farm, and, circling to the left, seemed inclined to ring back to Moyadd. From this purpose he was diverted apparently at a road; and presently he brought his pursuers to Castlecomer and a long check simultaneously, for he had crossed and re-crossed the road. Eventually he got into Castlecomer Park, the property of Mr. Wandesforde, where, as in the Kilkenny dominion, earths were

open. On the 22nd the pack was at Ballybrophy; two foxes turned up opportunely in Kilcoke. One was taken a long circuit by Cashens Gorse to Ballymeelish, when he got into a sewer. While I write they are stopped by snow like their brethren.

I said something a few paragraphs back about the oldest fox-hunting memory. Alas! the brain that to great natural quickness, and a marvellous and sustained keenness for all topics connected with hounds and hunting, added the accumulated experiences of ninety-four years, has passed away from among us. I allude to the recent death of Mr. Filgate, the squire of Lisrenny, in the co. Louth, who to the last enjoyed all the things which Shakespeare tells us should accompany old age. Strangers were much struck by the venerable presence of the old patriarch in full hunting costume at some of the nearer meets of his son's hounds (the Louth), where, on a confidential hunter of many seasons, closely attended by an equally confidential servant (for he had been blind for seven years), he entered into the spirit of the animated scene with a boy's zest and enjoyment. The recent death of his old friend Mr. Norman Lee (a pillar of the hunting state in Louth), in tribute to whose memory hunting in that county was suspended for a short period, appears to have given him his death shock. Those familiar with the Pytchley hounds for some years may recollect somewhat of his counterpart in the old squire of Moulton Grange, father to the present lord of that manor.

Among the casualties of the past ten days, I regret to have to record a severe fall sustained by Colonel Frazer, V.C., when going in his usual hard style in a good gallop with the Ward Union hounds. A blind ditch, I hear, did the mischief, which has disabled his bridle hand for some time I fear. This latter pack is enjoying continuously good sport. The Meath hounds were also stopped, in memory of Sir T. Dillon, Bart., on their Sion meet day. After the mockery of a short thaw, we are now frost-bound all round. *Rien ne va plus!*

December 18*th*, 1875.

"Pendent opera interrupta—Pendent notulæ interruptæ"—must form the melancholy prelude to the week's chronicle on which we are about to enter; and the most tantalising feature in the meteoric phenomena was the remarkable indecision of the contest 'twixt the gelid and thermal powers that held the fate of foxhunting within their grasp. Snow, more or less deep, has covered the face of the earth for some ten days or so; but we saw it grow "fine by degrees and beautifully less" every now and then; and accordingly, after conning the book of heaven most attentively before turning in, and comparing aneroids and mercurials with the charts of science and the penny papers with a zeal which might kindle enthusiasm in Admiral Fitzroy were he in the quick, pursuers would gloomily give orders to be called early, and to have hacks and hunters in readiness for the possible if not probable liquefaction; but either fresh snow fell in the small hours, or a relentless frost made minds turn once more to thoughts of skating or tobogganing, running over to town for a week to see the hairdressers, etc., mastering that intricate accumulation of business which you had kept on relegating to the coming spring or the Greek kalends, or entering on a course of improving reading *vice* the yellow literature in which the cunning men of Lutetia glorify the Quartier Bréda and dethrone the decalogue. So capricious were the weather moods that country houses in the vicinity of meets filled as usual with hunting guests, prepared to feed heartily before they fought doughtily on the morrow (is not foxhunting war's image and type?); but beyond the greenery of the card table nought of that hue met their eyes, and a good run at whist—taking the lead and keeping it—and some half-sovereigns in the exchequer, were the brightest result of these social gatherings (of course I speak only of bachelor Tabagies). I think, as a matter of fact, that during an odd hour or two in the afternoon hounds could have hunted well

enough in certain sections of the country, provided always, as the men of law say, that they could have got from their kennels to these spots—not to say a word about the dangers and difficulties of the return track—and provided always that foxes could be found sufficiently complaisant to avoid the snowdrifts and the hill strongholds, which were under the dominion of Jack Frost. In many parts of the vale the turf was not bad going, for the bone had not yet penetrated the soil, which was still spongy, from the recent rainfalls; but in a bank country riders are very soon reminded that there is a northern and a southern, a sunny and shady side to most of these obstacles, and that, while the former is good enough if not rendered too greasy by the thaw, the latter should be catalogued dangerous, both as to the taking off as well as to the landing! In Kildare, vale, woodland, and glen have not heard the animating cry of foxhound since last Saturday, the 27th ult. In Meath, so far as my present information goes, the last effort made was on the Tuesday following, in the pleasant country viewed from the Drumree station (which was also the meeting point); but a ring round Culmullen, and a promenade thence to Baltrasna and back again (a lovely line), under snow pressure, were all that could be done. Hunting being no longer *in esse*, though five hours of relaxation of the frost-grip would still admit of it *in posse*, I see nothing for it but *laudatio temporis acti*, adding a hope that more such days may soon be in store for us and them. The pack I speak of was the Westmeath, the date the 22nd ult., and the scene Pakenham Hall, Lord Longford's park, which has been very prolific of stout foxes during the recent past seasons; and the circumstance is noteworthy, seeing that his lordship seldom pursues, and that there is a strong tendency to game preservation in the neighbourhood, though not at the expense of foxhood —in theory or practice. Here they found at once, and, forcing their fox over a very good line of open country, ran him into Meath, and turned him over close to Ballymanus cross roads,

which is, or used to be, a well-known spring meet of the Meath hounds: 45 minutes with a good ending. The next draw was Kanturk, and here too a fox was found at once, and sent across the hill, as if the harbour of Cullen's Gorse was his point; but something or other turned him from it leftwards towards Turbotstown, which he skirted, and thence, after one bend to the right, he ran straight to the Rock of Corry, and got into a cleft. This is a Meath covert also, and unstopped, of course.

This pack had another good day on the 3rd inst., when they went out with great determination, in spite of frost and snow, to the meet at Moyvoughly cross roads. There, or rather in the adjacent gorse, they found at once, and ran a ring by Fairfield to the starting point, and thence to Ballintubber, where their fox got to ground. They then went on to Rosemount, where a very good fox turned up and took the pack along straight and fast to Crieve, were the earths were open. The state of the weather naturally made the field an extremely small one, for really the country was hardly ridable.

In Limerick the general complaint has been the lowness of the scent, which has precluded anything of brilliancy for some weeks. On Wednesday, however (1st inst.), the bitch pack were out, and found these conditions improved in their favour. Routing a fox out of Inchirourk, they sent him through Castle Hewson towards Curragh Chase, but he did not reach the latter place, bending away to the right, to be bowled over in Nantenan. A very quick thirty minutes, principally over walls. On the following Friday, defying weather, they drew Croom Gorse, where they found a brace. Settling to one, who crossed a beautiful grass line, they brought their field along first at a gallop, then at a trot, which at last subsided into a walk, and ended in losing him after about four miles. A good fox turned up in Ballinalow Plantations, who ran nearly to Adare, crossed the river, and got to ground in Farringstown. Mr. Jorrocks' 25 per cent. of danger was an under-estimate to day, for grief abounded, the fencing

being naturally most dangerous. This ends the Limerick hunting chronicle till the weather permits a resumption of operations.

The mastership of the Bray harriers has fallen into the hands of Mr. Putland—said to be able ones, and efficient; and I hear a new pack has been purchased. Hunting pictures are mostly a summer delight, and a renewal of winter joys in the *horâ caniculæ*. Let me, however, recommend any provincial or Saxon pursuer, if frost-bound and intent on improving the lagging hours of this Arctic period in Ireland's capital, not to lose the opportunity of seeing a very artistic and life-like presentment in oil of Mr. Maxwell on his favourite hunter, surrounded by a few couple of his harriers, from the easel of Mr. Osborne, who has already been most successful in limning Mr. Lane Fox, Mr. Carey Reeves, and many others. This most talented and conscientious artist is now making studies for a large picture of the Ward Union Hunt, and has been engaged on the hounds' portraits for the last few weeks at Ashbourne. I should state that the picture in question is on view at Mr. Cranfield's well-known art gallery, almost *vis-à-vis* to Trinity College—or rather its Provost's residence.

Wherewithal may a muscular—and indeed, I may say, full-fleshed—pursuer keep away the encroachments of adiposity in this cold huntingless period? One such I saw recently—a very hard, straight, but ponderous man—taking easy lessons on the bicycle! With what effect remains to be seen. *Me judice*, the seat on that strange craft looks enough to deter any but the boldest heart; and, for my own part, I should as soon think of steering Umpire, or any similar horse, in a 2lb. saddle, as get into one, or tempt the bridge of Al-Shiraz on foot, while yet in the quick.

That splendid pack of foxhounds, the Curraghmore, have been under the same malign or blessed (from whichever point of view you regard it—the fox or the M.F.H.) influence of want of scent, as their neighbours in Limerick, and, though many a hound triumph has been patiently gained, there has been nothing very

interesting to the general reader to chronicle from that wide territory.

On the 4th inst. I believe "the maddest, merriest" gallop of the year was enacted by certain followers of the Ward Union Hunt—maddest, because few but the *fanattici* would have thought of hunting as a possibility; merriest, because as are stolen kisses so are stolen runs—and here was one stolen from the very jaws of Jack Frost. The meet was at Priest-town cross roads, and Charlie Brindley the dauntless had actually sent a message to the acting M.S.H. to warn all metropolitans that hunting was not to be attempted that day. A slight sign of thaw in the afternoon brought out the hounds; the messenger missed the master. The upshot was an enlargement, and a capital 40 minutes by Balfstown, Ballintree, Clonee Road, Summerseat, to Mr. Babbett's place, where the capture was effected. A distinguished Spaniard was, I hear, of the party. He must surely think the Ward Union caballeros Progressistas of the first force. A captain of the 17th Lancers was, I believe, riding hardest over the path of peril!

On Saturday afternoon a decided thaw set in; but it froze again in the minor hours, and *c'est à recommencer*. By Monday, however, hunting hearts were cheered by a day which must have done vast things in the way of general liquefaction and the turning of "bone" into mud and clay, so warm, still and genial was the atmosphere. "With verdure clad the fields appear," to quote the celebrated cantata. In the vale before noon the candescent aspect of nature melts gradually into patches of piebald; then presently, by the time of the setting sun, the native hue of the pastures usurps the entire framework of the horizon. I heard in the capital that men on hunting thoughts intent set out on a pilgrimage to Ashbourne, but they reported that the country was still dangerous, and returned *re infectâ*.

In Sir Thomas Burke, Bart., who died very recently, Ireland mourns the loss of another link in a brilliant social chain, now,

alas! sadly dimmed and contracted. The Galway hounds, in tribute to his memory, did not leave the kennels on Tuesday, the 14th. His extensive woodlands at Marble Hill, though sedulously preserved for shooting, were well stocked with foxes, who combined the stoutness of the woodland with the wildness of the contiguous mountains, and in these fine training grounds Mr. Burton Persse's hounds learned much of that *ensemble* and that hunting as a pack, not to speak of the gift of tongues, which so distinguishes them. Sir Thomas Burke was for a long period a steward of the Turf Club in Ireland, and the Marble Hill Stakes, like the Beresfords and Angleseys, point to a bygone era of that institution, which, if neither purer or better than the present, was, some say, somewhat more patrician in tone.

The first meet after a long interregnum of frost and snow, such as we have been blessed with in Ireland, partakes somewhat of the characteristics of an opening day, a "premier réprésentation," and has all the charms and some of the drawbacks of such a performance. The machine has been thrown out of gear, and the chances are that some fly-wheels will be defective, or the bearings will get heated; at any rate, of one thing we may be quite certain, dropping the analogy—that the horses will all be stable-proud, and will find a thousand unpleasant ways of venting the exuberance of their pent-up spirits. The Kildare hounds began their second season, so to speak, at Newbridge on the 14th instant, at their usual hour of 11 A.M., and not 11.45, as I saw announced in a Dublin morning paper of the preceding date, which might have misled a great many had they not verified the accuracy of the *affiche*, as I fortunately did myself, by an inquiry at head-quarters. The morning was lovely and clear, but you had not gone a mile before you learnt that there had been several degrees of frost during the night, and that the old amalgam of frozen snow in the shady spots of the road must be marked as extremely dangerous and slippery. However, if, in the words of the old duet, "Caution marks the guarded way,"

there is no fear of your not getting to the tryst, for the sun shone out brilliantly by 10.30, and the approaches to Newbridge were soon thick with frosty mud.

There is little to catch the eye in the thriving little city of Newbridge, on the banks of the Liffey. As denoted by its nuncupation, it is of recent growth, and owes its origin and welfare to the cavalry regiment which always fills its capacious barracks, with an auxiliary force of artillery, etc. Let us, therefore, turn in at the wide portals of the barrack square, and the first danger you will encounter, once past the sentries, will be a storming party of gunners, intent on making you taste of their good cheer and take a cup of comfort. A little further on, the grooms of the Queen's Bays will be in attendance to make you dismount and turn into the mess room; and here Col. Stewart and his brother officers are dispensing *petits verres* and all sorts of good things to a fast-thawing crowd of pursuers in scarlet and black, and not a few ladies, who have ventured out strongly armoured in seal and sables. It is a very gay and pretty scene, and the next best thing to a lawn meet in a fine park, for the dressed ground of the barrack square is very extensive and well kept, and its vivid green throws out the white and tan of the hounds and the scarlet of "the army" into fine contrast and relief. Mr. Mansfield grants ten minutes for variation of watches and for dallying over the pleasant things purveyed by the soldiers, and then he sets a very long cortége in motion towards the Curragh, distant about an English mile, which is sometimes curtailed by a canter through Moorfield if you know its occupants. One of the last scenes I portrayed with this pack was an evening at these furzy knolls on the northern edge of the Curragh, when we found three foxes, killing one, and putting a brace to ground; and here we are again, though in a far colder temperature. A very careful exploration of them this morning yielded no fox; so there was nothing for it but to trot on some threemiles eastwards to Silliott Hill, whose thick gorse was partially burnt down some time ago,

but where there is still ample lying for a leash of foxes. No sooner inside the enclosure than they spoke to their quarry; and for a Silliott Hill fox he took wonderfully little pressing, breaking away at the far side of the covert from where the field were posted and pointing his mask for Herbertstown. Away we go, but the first field is a bit of plough well mellowed by the snow, and if it was a big one it would have done much towards taming the effervescence of horse play, for it rode very deep. However, it was a rather small one; and the next scene is again in a lane-way, while the hounds are racing after their fox best pace on either side of a high bank, heads up, sterns down, and every sign and token of tremendous burning scent. Out of the lane crashes Mr. Hubert Moore, on a slashing big bay, followed by Major the Hon. E. Lawless and Sir Michael Hicks Beach, and next came the *polloi*. For a field all is smooth galloping; but a sheep colley dog has made the fox swerve from his point, and now he turns back towards the gorse; but the long train of horsemen cuts him off, so he skirts it cleverly, and makes his way over a well-wired line of grass in the direction of Melon Hill, presently crossing a by-road and emerging into Mr. Bateman's fine grass farm, where sheep rather bothered the hounds, and caused a check or two. On then to the cottage of that well-known jarvie, Pat Mullally (be sure you ask for his car if fortune brings you to the Curragh), where the fox crossed the Athgarvan Road, and ran through the grass lands of Rosemount to the well-known earths on the banks of the Liffey, which were well stopped on this occasion, and thence by Father Clowney's neat cottage on along the riverain fields, till he found some old disused masonry under Great Connell, into which he managed to creep. By one of the thousand-and-one chances friendly to foxhood, a very sharp gallop was spoilt by the sheepdog I have alluded to, for seldom this year have I seen this pack carry a better head or seem prouder of their scent than to-day. By this time the very large field began to dwindle—it had comprised a few notabilities in the horse world—

and I regret to say one fine horse went home injured by wire, though only slightly. A young lady, too, got a fall, but did not seem to mind it a bit.

Another long trot to Herbertstown Gorse, and while the hounds were drawing it carefully, you became very soon aware of a change in the temperature and a northing in the air—in fact it was freezing hard, and some prophesied more snow. Nothing turned up here, so on we jog along the canal bank, looking at the partially frozen surface below, and cut into by a bitingly sharp blast, till, after sundry turns, we get into those wide pasture lands which lead up to Osberstown Gorse, and the hounds were no sooner in its rich acreage than they spoke to a fox, or foxes. The cold was now anything but pleasant, and the daylight told us plainly that its hours were numbered; so impatience grew strong, and perhaps expressive, as this reluctant fox broke two or three times only to return to covert. A very small field now remains—about a couple of dozen or thirty. Away, away at last, first towards Morristown Lattin, then over a few fields, where you could let your hunter have his head, and then comes a cut-away bank with a wide gripe; two are down, if not more. Then Mr. R. Kennedy and his son jump a nasty bank and ditch into the Newbridge Road, which one of their immediate followers essaying, got into watery grief. Went on across this road to the canal bank, and here it appears that two foxes had run the line together—one turned back to the gorse, another crossed the canal on the ice, and ran under the ruined walls of Strafford's palace of Jigginstown, over a strongly fenced bit of vale, till he won his way to the old castle of Rathascar to try the earths. These he found stopped; so down he swung again into the vale, and began a very devious course, as if he hardly knew where he was; for he could scarcely, I imagine, have been blown enough, now, to be obliged to run the fences and hedgerows. Another road is now crossed, and we pass Mr. Fay's farmhouse, to enter into the fields of Newlands, when just as the leading men have jumped a staken

bound—or, if they preferred it, a very wide ditch—whoo-whoop! the fox has found a sewer, and a gallop that could only have lasted a few minutes more, by reason of the waning light, is cut short. Some of the fencing was anything but small or easy, and falls abounded, but no serious grief. A Limerick sportsman, Mr. Rose, was well carried; so were Mr. Love, on a black mare, an officer of the Bays, and Mr. Leslie Martin, of the 12th Lancers.

The story of the United Hunt Club (Cork) during the past fortnight or three weeks has been on this wise: On the 29th ult. they met at Mount Uniacke Cross—that is to say, *three* met—and had a nice gallop from Meelane, through Balyre and Castletown—to Ellenbower, when they lost their fox. From Monoloo they had a smart twenty minutes to ground at Condon's covert afterwards. On the 1st they were at Ahern Bridge, and well attended, spite of incipient frost. Unlucky in chopping a fox in the morning, while they were discussing him a second broke away, and for six miles led them a rare dance, till he found a friendly sewer. The few who saw the end of this gallop may be easily reckoned, and comprised the Messrs. Montgomery, Mr. Nason, Mr. Furlong, and a soldier, whose name I cannot record for want of knowing it. I believe this is allowed to have been the best thing of the season so far. On the 3rd they were at Dunkathel, the residence of the acting M.F.H., Mr. T. Gubbins, but from want of scent the morning was slow and it did not quicken into anything better than a hunting run after a game fox from Bennisolough to Wakeham's Glen, where the hounds were taken off, owing to the hard frost which set in.

December 25th, 1875.

Solvitur acris hiems gratâ vice veris et Favoni,
Trahuntque siccas machinæ carinas!

Grim winter dies! Spring knells his death!
Soft yield the snows to zephyr breath!
The ice king's vanquish'd—see, he yields!
New prank'd with emerald tints the fields!

The boats haul'd down from yonder shore
Await the fisher's sweep or oar;
And we pent prisoners of the chase
At length may take good heart of grace.

I suppose it is lawful for the scribe to break out into song, even though said song be but somewhat unrhythmical imitation of our much-conned friend and sometimes foe (his epistles *did* contain some hard things), Quintus Horatius Flaccus. *He* babbled of green fields; so did Falstaff; and why may not we sing in unison with the universal pæan sent up by all animated nature? The little birds are "piping without surcease;" the crows have become voluble, and take less gloomy and despondent views of things in general ever since the white surcoat was removed from the fields, and the native green reasserted itself in more vivid tints than ever. True, the nearer tiers of hills look like Little Jack Horner's pudding or cake (I forgot, it was a pie), supposing said cake was well frosted over, and supposing Jack Horner worked away with a will—for the ling and gorse and heather peep out, as the surrounding snow melts away visibly. The higher peaks are of course still shrouded in white; but what concerns us is that the vale is green once more.

And what colour should be seen
Where our foxes' homes have been,
But our own immortal green?
Says the Shan Van Voght!

On Tuesday, the 14th, up to a very late hour P.M., it looked

any odds on a relapse into the frozen system of things for an indefinite period, and I recollect that the casual observation at the covert side of a very hard light weight, not unknown between the flags on your side of the Channel, "that he had broken his skates on the last day of the frost, but that he meant to get a new pair," was considered *de très mauvaise augure* by the superstitious-minded.

On Thursday, the 16th, the Kildare hounds were due at Moore Abbey by 11.30 A.M., but, as they journeyed from the kennels to Monasterevan by train, Will Freeman and his whips were not responsible for their non-appearance before the hands of the stable clock had well nigh met at the noontide hour. *Tutus si tardus* seems the motto of the Great Southern and Western line, and it is acted up to with the most provoking pertinacity; but, as we are nearing fast to the minimum allowance of Day's candle, one had hoped for an exceptional dispensation of rapidity on this occasion.

With the hounds came a large posse of grooms and led hunters, who had travelled by the iron instead of the macadamised path; but of carriages and pursuers who had hacked to covert there was a formidable array, and, after a survey of one another and the goodly pile in front of them, and the fine outline of woodland and hill which closed in the horizon, the engrossing topic was what had become of the hounds? Fortunately, it was neither a *mauvais quart-d'heure* or *demi-heure;* for never yet did mid-December usher in a fairer or more enjoyable day. There was a hush of repose over all nature. The atmosphere was warm without mugginess, and everything within the near distances was revealed as clearly as if on a new canvas, while a sort of smoke haze enveloped the more remote objects of the landscape.

Moore Abbey itself is a large comfortable-looking mansion, fit, as the auctioneers and appraisers say, for any nobleman or gentleman's family. It forms three sides of a quadrangle; but what connection it can have with an abbey is hid from the casual

observer, seeing that the lines and type of the building are comparatively modern, and no trace appears of any ingraft of mediæval or ecclesiastical architecture. The River Barrow flows in sluggish and somewhat turbid current through part of the park; while to the north and westward, beyond the thriving town of Monasterevan, stretch wide expanses of dreary moor and peat moss, where a brace of red setters and a few hundred No. 7 cartridges would be far more useful than the best hunter that ever stood on iron. In front of the mansion, sloping gently downwards, is an oval-shaped hill of considerable acreage, well wooded; and, as the highest point in the surrounding flats, it naturally forms a landmark for many a square mile. I should state that Moore Abbey is on the verge of the Kildare territory, and is practically much nearer to many of Mr. Cosby's field than to the majority of those who take their pleasure with the county pack; consequently not a few from the Queen's county were to be seen between the stables and the hall-door awaiting the advent of the lady pack, for it is their turn to-day. Here comes Mrs. Adare's carriage with a freight of ladies, and one very notable character in the *mundus venaticus*, Mr. Horace Rochfort, of Carlow, muffled up and great-coated, and evidently not intending to ride. Mr. Skeffington Smyth is on a fine bay mare, that won a good reputation with her previous owner, Mr. Bland. Lieut.-Col. Dunne has come from the adjacent Curragh, and the Queen's Bays have also sent an early contingent to the gay scene. But here are the hounds at last, and presently a large number of persons emerge from the hall and descend the stone steps to claim their horses as they are led up. Among them are the M.F.H., and the Marquis of Drogheda, Mr. Forbes, Mr. Percy La Touche, Mr. Fortescue Tynte, etc. Footmen come out with the customary horns of ale and sandwiches for the hunt servants, while some of the more distant arrivals (I mean arrivals from more distant places), look as if they would not much mind if they could be somehow multiplied and distributed.

At last we are *en route* for our *afternoon's* hunting, and the way leads up to the hill I alluded to just now. It is soon vocal with hound strains; but as to how many foxes were on foot simultaneously, how many times they went up the middle and down again, it boots not now to tell. They beat and baffled the hounds at any rate, though scent did not seem on the whole unfavourable. I suppose a couple of hours were thus consumed, when we next found ourselves *en route* to Hybla, a very snug-looking gorse of about two acres, maintained, I believe, by Mr. Exshaw. One of the Moore Abbey foxes had been viewed stealing off towards this covert an hour or so before; and, besides, it was well-known that some two or three more made it their head-quarters, spite of a railway which runs within a few yards of it. Ten minutes after they were put in, the hounds spoke to game, and one fox was viewed by "the man at the corner" crossing a ride; but what befel I never learnt, for all of a sudden hounds ceased to hunt, and, though no sign of open earth or sewer appeared, every trace of foxhood was most mysteriously lost. Daylight was fast ebbing, and but one gleam of hope remained to redeem the character of a very dull day; it was to come from Silliott Hill Gorse (Lord Drogheda's), and thither we trotted on sharply, as it was some two or three miles distant. A find—an instantaneous find—and the very dwarfed and dwindled field are galloping away as if one and all they meant to make a quick thing of it. A turn round the gorse, and then the fox set his head resolutely downhill for a rather swampy-looking bit of vale in front, as if minded to run to Kildangan or Nurney. Over the Kildare Road the line now leads straight onwards, the hounds carrying a fine head, but not running so fast as not to have lots of leisure to give expression to their joy and delight. Some grief occurs going out of the road at an upbank, stone-faced; but all are sailing away once more till another road is met—and here the fox was turned from his original purpose, we must suppose, for he swung round to the left and got within a field or two of the town of Kildare, when a fur-

ther inclination in the same direction brought him back to his starting point. As the clocks said four now, or all but four, I think we may drop the curtain on this red rover's fate, though I left his enemies still busy with him. As a matter of history, he was forced out again as far as Cherry Mills, where he squatted, and was killed before he could get back home.

On the previous Tuesday the Queen's county hounds met at Durrow, and found a fox on the Ballagh, who went off towards the Kilkenny country; he was, however, unfortunately headed, and got back to covert, where he hung for some time, but at last struck out for Grantstown, in which direction he was slowly followed, with unavailing scent, and eventually given up.

Post nubila Phœbus! Almost a week of uninterruptedly fine, still weather, far better than summer often treats us to! It is almost a portent, and had it happened in Livy's days no doubt he would have drawn a moral from it, or put it down among the memorable events of the year, such as *Bos locutus est.* Of course a deluge was bound to follow sooner or later, but very fortunately it chose the hours of night for its descent, and after a very pluviose morning the sun shone out resplendently by 9 A.M. on the morning of the 18th, when the Kildare hounds were due by the card at Hortland Gate at 11 A.M.

Those who have followed the fortunes of this pack in print will recollect that a Kilcock or Courtown Gate meet generally leads, directly or indirectly, to Hortland Gorse in some of its peripheries, so that I need not enlarge again upon the Peerless grass pastures which encircle both these trysts; but it may be remarked *en parenthèse* that Courtown has this advantage over its neighbour, that, whereas Hortland has one bad side, where the pastures merge into swampy moorland and bog, unridable or barely ridable, Courtown's surroundings are positively irreproachable—grass and all grass, green and all green. Courtown, too, is nearer to the Midland Station of Kilcock, and is thus a greater temptation to hunting men from Dublin than the more remote fixture.

Needless, too, now to dwell upon the characteristics which meet the eye on either side of the long road between Naas or Sallins and these fixtures. They have been told before, and have not changed much that I could discover to-day. The road to both is identical for several miles along the Liffey valley, but at Clane village the most learned in road law seem to think it the wisest and best plan to diverge to the left, instead of holding on your course straight through Painstown. You will then, after passing some fine grass farms, find yourself riding by the side of the park wall of Donadea Castle, from which the stretch to Hortland is somewhere about three miles of English reckoning. But the roads! I have read the denunciations of daily and weekly papers on the state of the London thoroughfares on the sudden liquefaction of the snow, and the vile compound which enlightened ædiles compounded to soak through porpoise hide and cork soles, and to defile petticoats and trailing garments. We had nothing of the sort here. Our thaw was the gentlest and easiest of transitions, and the subsequent lovely days prevented any great accumulation of back water from choked conduits. After last night, however, we had experiences which might lead us to sympathise with your forlorn filthy condition. A general state of "skilly" is the most opposite image I can think of for the roads. The drains on either side were choke-full, and if you attempted to canter along the inviting sidings which stretched along the roads, you found very soon that they rode like plough (at least like some of the light plough where a thin gravelly soil is slightly and superficially scratched, and which we are so accustomed to in this country of sparse tilth). By 11 A.M. the lovers of hunting landscapes had a goodly one presented to their view—a straight broad road lined with carriages of all sorts, and pad grooms walking their hunters about; a lodge gate, near to which are the hounds basking in the sun, while several score of the earlier pursuers are riding about comparing notes, and possibly hoping (early birds and punctual birds are a leetle hard

sometimes) that the master will give scant law to that large section of humanity, the tardy and the unpunctual. The crows are holding a jubilant and very noisy *caucus* on the state of the weather and their spring prospects, and everything to northward and eastward looks most charming and hunting-like—a park with no large woods, hedgerows, or shaws to hold or detain a fox; and, if you turn your gaze from the road, good store of fair, sound grass land for miles before you.

A hard-pulling hack having landed me somewhat before my time at the rendezvous, let us glance about at the gallery formed round the pack, and the crowds who are converging from many roads, led as by magnetic force. Mrs. Davis, of Courtown, is on her Blood Royal horse, while Capt. Davis is riding a cobby-looking, but powerful chestnut, and both (I mean horses) will stand the scrutiny and criticism to which their early advent is sure to subject them. Miss Sartoris is on a plainer stamp of bay horse, but a thorough workman, as I can testify. Mr. Ambrose More O'Ferrall (I dare say many soldiers and civilians pleasantly recollect his father as Governor of Malta) has just driven up a dashing pair of bays, and is getting on another good-looking bay, that, however, seems as if he would require an extraordinary biceps muscle to keep within due bounds. Mr. O'Ferrall, who was one of the managing committee of the Westmeath hunt, has only recently transferred his stud to Kildare, and I think this is his first appearance this season. Sir James Higginson is on his wiry-looking dark chestnut of many seasons. Lord Clonmell and the Hon. Capt. Scott are coming up in their very well-horsed buggy, and a chestnut and a black, well worth a passing look, are waiting for them to mount. Lord Cloncurry and Major the Hon. E. Lawless, both admirably mounted on different classes of horses, are among the punctual; so is Col. Lyster, V.C., and so are the Hon. Charles Bourke, and Messrs. Moore, Chapman, Kennedy, Percy La Touche, Fortescue Tynte, etc. Mr. C. Rynd and his sons are also there, and on *hunters*, and so are Capt.

Tuthill and his son, General Irwin and his son. Mr. Maher, of Enfield, is comparatively at home here, and he does not often ride a bad or bad-looking horse, and the same observation holds good of Mr. Murphy, who is now living at Hortland House, and who really wants a welter horse; while Mr. T. Conolly represents the House of Commons—at any rate I think he is the oldest member out to-day, for Mr. M'Evoy, of Tobertinan, resigned his seat for Meath country some time ago. He, too, rides a very neat young blood bay, who in time will probably make a pleasant and capable hunter, but is now rather of the *calidum cum* order.

Mr. Forbes has Hock, a very perfect-looking chestnut, for second string out. Lord Langford will be sure to well represent his native county, Meath, for he is very seldom indifferently mounted, and his weight is all in his favour. Lord Kilmaine has come from Westmeath, bringing a very good specimen of a 12st. 7lb. hunter. The Queen's Bays have mustered fairly strong here. Last of all in my catalogue—though *last* will not be their place, be sure, when the real business begins—come the late and the present hon. secretaries to this hunt, Mr. R. Bushe and Mr. D. Mahoney; the latter, in my very humble opinion, about the best-mounted pursuer in a very well-mounted field to-day, manners, performance, pace, and staying powers being duly considered. At last the *mot d'ordre* goes forth, and the cavalcade, which forms an enormous force, sets out by the road for the gorse, about three-quarters of a mile distant, while a few who know the geography take a pleasant short cut past Hortland House.

In an ocean of green, contrasting strongly with the surrounding tints by its more *foncée* hue, lies the small gorse from which we the *polloi* are separated by a sharp bank and wide ditch, which effectually precludes any attempt at stealing a start or encroachment on fox or hounds on the part of the field. The arrangement must be a real joy to the master and the hunt ser-

vants with *such* a crowd behind them! The corner of the field we are planted in is very soft, and warns us that the going will be something unusually heavy, for the soil is very rich and loamy, and is thoroughly saturated. Gone away! gone away! some score of men charging the bank I spoke of just now, and two ladies as well. Sundry loose horses, and more or less grimy hatless men, is the first scene. "How rotten!" says Mrs Davis, as she skims safely over the big ditch, though perhaps with a slight struggle and kick back. A galloping field and a gateway jammed with struggling, striving Centaurs—Mr. Robert Kennedy, and I think two or three more, including the two Mr. Blackers, despising the gate, and charging a high bank into the road, by which they gained a famous start. At the far side of the road a narrow, rotten bank and ditch, which I should think emptied many more saddles; then a very deep drop; and by this time those who are riding the line have spread out fan-like over the fields, and are doing their best to catch the flying pack—for flying they are, if hounds ever had wings. Surely this is the same fox who ran so gallantly (the best thing of the Kildare season) some three weeks ago, for we are going over much the same country, only bending over a wider arc, and more to the right than then! When hounds are going such a pace, there is but little leisure for observations on your neighbours and leaders; but some amusing things strike one in the early stages. Here is a heavy weight emerging from a deep ditch, with a bank on the far side, which has, I think, proved too rotten for his hunter's hind legs. His hunting cap has slipped off, and as he drips he reminds one of the neophyte crossing the Line for the first time, on whom Neptune has just operated. Here we are once more on lighter ground, having crossed a road a second time, and galloping over precisely the same fields, and jumping the same obstacles—large flying fences, that might be raced at—as the last day. Here is the farmyard where the check *then* held us for a few minutes, but where no grateful pause aids the sobbing horses

Vincent Brooks Day & Son, Lith.

WHERE AM I? IS THIS GRAVESEND?

to-day; and here we are at the corner of Donadea Park wall (some were arrested by wire, including myself and companions, in our line here), and in five minutes more we are in the old gorse of Donadea; time, up to this point, made by the precisians, 22½ minutes. Dislodged from this haunt (I have since learnt that this was certainly a fresh fox), our fox now ran downwards, and crossed some rather swampy-looking vale, where no one tried to ride, and the hounds soon got half a mile ahead before a friendly parallel road could be gained to help men and horses. Fortunately, after about a mile, our fox swung round to the left, aiding the riders greatly, and for about another quarter of an hour the hounds hunted on slowly towards "Prosperous," the line being over good upland. Then came a long check, and the next stage was along the edge of a red bog; but the interest of the run, save for hound men and real sportsmen, was over ere this, though I believe I am correct in stating that, walking and zigzagging, they followed him into Mount Armstrong. The opinion of strangers as to the pace and quality of a gallop such as the one I have feebly portrayed, if they are competent judges of hunting and accustomed to go fast themselves, is perhaps the safest criterion to go by; and I hope Lord Kilmaine will pardon me for quoting his verdict, that it was about the fastest twenty-odd minutes he had ever ridden, as conclusive that, at any rate, it was a real good thing, leaving all malodorous comparisons aside. Who had the best of it I really cannot attempt to say, but I believe it was a case of *nunc mihi, tunc tibi*, verified to the letter. Mr. R. Kennedy started with a good lead, and I believe maintained it till he came to grief. I hear Mr. Fortescue Tynte was well in front for a long time, while Mr. Blacker and his brother, Mr. Percy La Touche, the Hon. E. Lawless, Mr. Forbes, Lord Kilmaine, and some half-dozen others gave and took leads alternately, if not absolutely to *all*, at any rate to their divisions. Grief and dirt abounded, and it would take too long to count the victims to rotten banks and

over-wide water jumps (many men and horses were required for one extrication). Among the heavy brigade, Lord Cloncurry was going along very well (admirably carried), and Mr. Love, on a big chestnut, was wonderfully well borne over the big fences and the deep holding ground, his weight being taken into account. A pleasant gallop from Lodge Park *viâ* Ardrass, towards Killadoon, finished the day. The dog pack were out to-day.

On Monday, the 20th, these hounds met a very numerous and fashionable circle of admirers at Old Kilcullen, a wind-swept hill, crowned by the ruined remains of an old keep, which, if antiquaries are to be credited, bears the burden of some six or seven centuries, and witnessed not a few doughty deeds of derring-do in the intermittent spasms of rebellion which formed the staple of early Irish history. A very long strip of common leading up to it is very favourable for such an assemblage as was held there to-day, including quite a field of ladies alone (not *femmes soles*), and a *posse* of Curragh horses, which may generally be labelled dangerous, and given a wide berth. A warm but watery sun, at 10.30 A.M., looked down on a great deal of superficial water, which had fallen through the night, and which the saturated soil was quite unable to absorb. By 11 A.M. there were symptoms of mist and rain, and a driving wind from the west did not tend to smooth arrangements for hunting. Martinstown Woods was the first point of inquiry, but for once they were foxless. Not so the neighbouring gorse, from which a splendid old fox emerged at best pace, jumped a big double in front of the field, with one hound close to his brush, and was soon followed into the oak woods by the pack. A ring or two round woods and shrubberies, and then he makes fairly for the open, pointing for Carrick Hill, to which gorsy eminence he was followed at a walk and trot alternately, and in another quarter of an hour abandoned, from the entire absence of scenting power—a phenomenon owing, perhaps, to the shower overhead, which soon came down in mist and thin rain. Then a very long trot finds

a welcome terminus at Major Borrowes's Gorse, in a corner of Giltown Park; a feint or two, and he's fairly off; but his impetus for the open, in the direction of Gormanstown, was baffled, and he sweeps across the entire width of Giltown Park, at a pace which, if sustained long, would have soon tailed off men and horses. By Sallymount into Harristown, through Rochestown towards Moor Hill, then to the Blackthorns, across the Liffey, near a disused mill, and thence to Kelly's Wood, scent still serving admirably; but among the shrubberies and dead leaves which encumbered the ground near the Carnalway Lodge the *vis vivida* died away to nothing, and this very fast-running fox will, I hope, remain to give as fast a gallop over a less parky course. Dunstown Wood, which has well served the commonweal this year, was blank this evening, and at dusk the hounds were, if I mistake not, still busy with the reluctant fox at Silliott Hill.

It is somewhat of a fashion in Ireland to talk of the Kildare hounds as the killing Kildares. They have been rather more bloodthirsty this year than usual, but many things rather militate against the hounds killing the foxes they hunt in Kildare—light soil and enormous, often thrusting fields, to name the principal. The Meath hounds revel in more blood by far as a rule—smaller fields and richer grass land aiding this consummation. Let us glance at the "murderous Meaths," if nickname they must have. From Nov. 30 to Dec. 14 frost and snow sealed their hunting grounds. On the 14th they emerged over very slippery roads to Dunshaughlin, and had a capital 1 hour 40 minutes, with a kill in the open—the line being somewhat of a circle, *viâ* Lagore, the latter segment very fast, and the country beautiful.

On the 16th they had a lot of demesne hunting about Balrath; then from Mr. F. Battersby's good covert of Bolton, a fox took them at racing pace to Clonabraney, through Bobsgrove to Lakefield, the hounds being stopped as they were running in to Loughcrew, owing to darkness coming on. Time 1 hour 30

minutes. On the 17th they met at Philpotstown, in weather balmy enough for spring. A fox went away handsomely for Meadstown, but sorely pushed, he got into a wet drain. A ringing fox was soon rolled over at Meadstown, and a very fast gallop from Tullahanogue, back towards Meadstown, wound up the day. I hear Meath has been apportioned into districts, with a view to having the local earth-stopping under the special surveillance of certain of the pursuers of the vicinity, and that much is expected from the arrangement.

The hunting of the Bellinter harriers (a very perfect pack and establishment) has been temporarily suspended, owing to a family bereavement.

Turning from east to the south, the United Hunt (Cork) found hunting almost impracticable on the 15th, owing to the state of the ground. They stirred, however, no less than five brace of foxes that day, meeting at Dundillerick. On the 17th they were at Saleem, and had a very lively spin of twenty minutes from Castlenairy, though it brought them back again to the park, where a view was gained, and presently "old Beeswing" signalised herself by racing away and rolling over her fox single-handed. I hear Lord Fermoy and his sisters were in front all through. Kilcrone in the evening produced no sport.

I regret extremely that want of space prevents my noticing a good run which the Carlow and Island hounds had in their Wexford country last week; two good gallops with the Ward Union hounds, Saturday and Monday last; and a day of very high-class sport which the Meath hounds afforded a numerous gallery on Tuesday, the 21st.

January 1st, 1876.

I suppose it would be very paradoxical to question the axiom that foxhounds have for their *raison d'être* the killing of foxes; that this is the primary law of their existence; that for this end they live, move, and have their being; that, in order to attain

this desideratum in the most practical and efficient manner, science is invoked in mating noble sires to comely and keen matrons—*at coeat par jungaturque pari;* that farmers and farmers' wives are attacked diplomatically, and the chord of emulation, or love of silver plate, or the love of sport *pur et simple* is cunningly touched to induce thrifty canny souls to give the offspring of these lofty alliances the benefit of country air and country diet *ad libitum*, and to condone a multitude of youthful indiscretions, such as the filching occasionally of the Sunday joint and the larceny of many a promising fowl and turkey; that with this aim and object, by-and-by they are transferred to the kennel and placed under the superintending care of experts learned in all the learning of dog-lore, till at last, if no deep-rooted vices incurable by whipcord consign them to the gallows, they take their place in the county kennels, forming part and portion of a great national institution. It would be rank heresy to doubt such a conclusion for a moment. The college of huntsmen (a guild of no small importance) would, I feel certain, excommunicate such heresiarchs; henwives would pronounce on them the greater anathema; and the Freemanites would dance a war dance incontinently if it were once to be admitted as a recognised doctrine that foxhounds, with all their pomp and pageantry, did not exist for the aforesaid murderous purpose. And yet! and yet! Do we encourage, patronise, and attend racing to improve our national breed of horses and maintain the superiority of our few brigades of cavalry? Do we subscribe our fivers or centuries annually to keep the vulpine species within Malthusian limits? Is not *sport* the real paramount object of all these careful preparations and this vast expenditure of talent, energy, and of the root of all evil? Is not this the true answer of the Grand Louvetier of France when twitted about the *cui bono* of his office—of the tiger slayer in India, and of the foxhunter in these foxhunting islands, *pace* huntsmen and all these sanguinary souls?

I think this train of thought was set in motion by seeing

to-day the pomp, pride, and circumstance of one of the largest assemblies it has been my fortune to witness gathered together for the special purpose of observing how the Meath hounds set to work to find, hunt, and kill the foxes which infest their extensive territory and more especially that portion of it which is contiguous to the metropolis. The date is the 21st of December; the trysting place Hollywood Rath, the pleasantly situated mansion of Mr. Thompson, surrounded by park-like grounds, some belts of timber, and luxuriant shrubberries. The hour for the grand onslaught is fixed at 11.30, seeing that the Meath hounds have to come a long and toilsome journey from their kennels near Navan in the morning, by rail for the most part; and those whose appetites have been sharpened by a long ride will find hospitable tables full of everything good in the shape of tiffin or the West Indian institution, second breakfast, spread out in Mr. Thompson's dining-room; and I purposely record the fact (myself impransus), inasmuch as those glorious hunting breakfasts for which Yorkshire and Berkshire have or had such good renown, are fast fading into desuetude, and hardly exist now, save in the pleasant pages of Surtees or the immortal sketches of John Leech, to whom hunting owes so deep a debt of gratitude. No. The problem before Mr. Waller's mind's eye, as the enormous procession winds through the avenue, is how best he can cater to the sport-loving proclivities of all these pursuers. To show sport under somewhat difficult circumstances is his *crux*. Theirs to enjoy it as best they can, and do as little mischief to hounds and horses, lands, tenements, and hereditaments, as possible; for we may be quite certain that no M.F.H. would otherwise expose his cherished hounds to the tender mercies of so mixed a multitude; while as for handling a fox, the odds in favour of the wily one to-day, at least in the earlier hours, are many to one.

In my last letter I recollect I commented upon the popular alliteration which couples killing and the Kildare hounds, and I

pointed out why it was somewhat inapposite, if only from the extreme popularity of the pack, and the enormous crowds they draw, when easily attainable by road or rail. I could not then foresee that in a few hours I should find myself a unit in a crowd of pursuers, on wheels and horseback, which is not often exceeded in any country. Let us glance at some of its component parts before a find has scattered the now orderly procession and *cortége* all over the face of the country. Among the carriage people Mrs. Chaplin's mail phaeton deserves the pride of place, for there is nothing neater out to-day. Lord Anally's landau has a fair freight, and so has Lady Olive Guinness's. Mrs. Morrogh's carriage holds the owner, who learnt a lesson a year or two ago in a broken arm to eschew crowded hunting fields such as this; while opposite her is Mrs. Nugent, well-known in Meath and Kildare hunting grounds, but whose bridle arm, bandaged and splintered up, tells of no collision or bad hunting fall, but of recent perils in the fashionable skating rink!

> Ah me! what perils do environ
> The fair whose keel is Plimpton's iron.

A few ladies are *en amazone* among them. Miss Sartoris is not on her usual mount, a big cross-made bay horse, but on a strong-backed cob of immense power, and capable of any amount of jumping, but with a will of his own which is sometimes in opposition to his rider's, though, as both mean being very near the hounds, the result is less discordant than might be expected.

Mr. Morrogh represents the Ward Union interest, but he is evidently not intent on performing to-day, for his friends seem to be riding his cleverest hunters, and his own mount is a greenish animal of much pedigree and future promise. Half a score of Ward Union men, if not a whole score, testify to the *entente cordiale* which reigns between staghunters and foxhunters. The 4th Dragoon Guards, headed by Col. Frank Chaplin, form a squadron of themselves, and among them is Capt. Bates, who

got a very severe fall yesterday, and some injuries from his horse's heels while down. However, he has survived those hard knocks, and the milder expostulations of the scribes who recently made 'the Pride of Kildare' a text for their commentaries; much plastered as to the head, he seems quite master of that nice hunter Mohawk, who so often figured a few years ago in your racing columns. The Hon. Mr. Greville and Mr. Pepys appear for the 60th Rifles, while the Guards, the Inniskillings, and the 17th Lancers send their several champions to the fray. Among the *habitués* of this pack are Lord Langford, the Hon. H. Bourke (admirably mounted), Col. Lyster, V.C., Messrs. Trotter and Kearsley, of the 5th Dragoons, Mr. Charles Cobbe, Mr. Lynch on a good old gray, Mr. Chapman (not 'Bob'), Mr. Whitwell Butter, Capt. C. Ponsonby, Mr. A. M'Neil on a very nice lengthy iron-grey, and a great many more whose names have at this moment escaped me. An ex-M.F.H. from England (western) was among the riders. Col. Fraser, V.C., was an enforced absentee from the painful cause (a broken or badly injured wrist) to which I alluded recently; but Mr. Cassidy, the celebrated if veteran *hippodamos* of Dublin, was present and busy in the cause of *education*.

Business, however, is now commencing, and the first stage is down a rather miry lane which leads to a small gorse known as Aungier's Gorse, which, though not a regular covert, is very holding, and from which I have seen a good run in the days of Lords Spencer and Hartington. It was blank to-day, and the three skirting plantations of Hollywood Rath did not give much hope of a find, when suddenly there is a tally, and a magnificent specimen of foxhood jumps out of a hedgerow, and is soon galloping away in the Dublin direction, some nine miles distant (English reckoning). A run and a kill at the foot of Nelson's Pillar, in the finest (or widest) street in Europe, would be a blessed consummation for the many Dublin sportsmen out, but it was not so to be. Macbride clapped his hounds on to

him in a few seconds, and it was at once evident that scent at any rate was not wanting. The second fence crossed was a sort of rhene or semi-brook. Mr. Apjohn—no mean performer, I believe, across country—sounded its depths and dirt, and emerged of very different aspect from his matutinal presentment. Balked probably at the coach road, our fox now turned to the right, and, running a circle and a half round Hollywood Rath grounds, got to earth in a sewer not far from the Dublin Road. He was left there undisturbed. I noticed a grey horse ridden by Mr. Gavacan, of Dublin, doing one or two very clever things among the quick-set hedges in this short pursuit. The next stage brought us to the edge of Ballymacarney Gorse, and doubts were soon set at rest about the whereabouts of the object of general solicitude, and he really behaved very handsomely, keeping the crowd outside his castle (it was much reduced by now) awaiting his exodus but a very few minutes. Facing a strong wind and leaving a bouquet that *le joli parfumeur* might have envied, he had to race for dear life, and to-day the race *was* to the swift. Minded first to cross the Ward River—in which he might have planted some of his human foes—he was probably diverted from this purpose by a multitude of foot people, who were intent on seeing the sensation jumping, and perhaps making a harvest among the shipwrecked and struggling. In a few fields he had crossed over a lane, and was making rapid tracks over grass fields, smooth and flat as a bowling-green, fenced for the most part by single banks and wide ditches, all fair and sound, and which a clever hunter need dwell and pause at for never an instant. A cemetery, with an ivy-mantled old church, is now passed by on the left, and so are the green hills of Kilbride, which formed a platform for a few spectators. The Wooton and Balfstown are passed by, and the Dardistown Brook —generally a signal weeder of fields skirted, when at a plantation near a farmhouse a long check occurred, and, though very wide casts were made round Priesttown old covert, there was

nothing more done in the way of effective pursuit; 19 minutes up to the check, and some say nearly five miles covered! I should myself have computed the distance at something less; but of the sharpness of the sustained pace there could be no doubt—certainly none on the part of the valiant strugglers who, getting away very fairly from Ballymacarney, never were able to come up to the flying pack. I believe Mr. Trotter was sitting down and riding one of his fastest horses—a grey, with, I fancy, fired hocks—and his efforts only landed him nearest to the hounds, but still at a considerable interval. Messrs. Kearsley, Waller, and Harry Bourke were well in front; and among the fuglemen were Lord Langford, on a nice bloodlike horse by Lucky Star, and Mr. A. Macneil. Mr. Whitwell Butler was signally unfortunate in injuring badly, if not fatally, his celebrated old mare, the mishap occurring in jumping into a road, while a gate, which he probably overlooked, was handy enough. The majority now turn their horse's heads for the metropolis. Those who have not had enough follow the pack to Kilrue, where a causeway leads you to the edge of a fine gorse, which has the reputation of sure holding. On either side are very wide grass fields; but if the obstacles are few, they are proportionately sizeable, though with little trappy or dangerous to a fairly trained, bold hunter. The find here is a very quick one, but the exit from the covert is very different from the last scene. Can an hour have made so decided a difference in the matter of scent? To be sure, rain is threatening, but the day is still warm, and the wind not very high. This time, however, the fox has prudently gone down wind. The line is twisty enough at first for a corkscrew, but presently it straightens, and takes us, after some galloping over grass, to the edge of a river or brook, which, be its local nuncupation what it may, is, I believe, a bit of the Ashbourne brook; this was jumped or forded, and we are galloping gaily along its banks, when the hounds suddenly throw up their heads, and

some forward casts made by Macbride on the far side of a road fail to rejoin the broken threads. Day is far gone, and the hounds have to return to their kennels by rail; so Mr. Waller assents to the only thing in his power, namely, to try Kilrue Gorse for a second fox. We are trotting on thither, when our hunted fox, who had gained a wet sewer leading into the brook I referred to, suddenly appeared upon the scene, coursed by a colley dog. The bitches of Diana are on his track directly; the air is full of entrancing hound melody, and there is a sharp scurry back again by a different and longer route to Kilrue. No time to hang here. The hounds send him sharply across the Dublin Road into more fine flat grass pastures; and now the wily one is forced to run up wind. Priesttown he leaves far on the left, scurrying on through the lands of Peacockstown, through the Lough of Ballyhack to Loughlinstown; leaving Mr. Gasteen's house on the left, thence over the Molinan River to Harborstown, where he swung round by Ballymacoll, and soon after this, as tides and trains wait for no man or hound, the pack had to be stopped, as it was bound for Dunboyne station, and had not much time to accomplish the intervening distance. Mr. Trotter, I believe, throughout enacted the old lady's version of Eclipse's performance. He may well ride greys, and the field may thank him for selecting so *voyant* a colour. By this time the morning crowd was reduced to very small proportions, but all seemed riding hard, though few kept throughout with the hounds. Riding but a very short distance myself with the hounds after they had crossed the Dublin Road, I can only say that I had no reason to cavil at the friends and neighbours I saw about me. Mr. Latten Thunder was riding a young and rather raw hunter in a most workmanlike fashion; but ground and distance were somewhat against youth and want of condition and experience, for I hear from good local authorities that they got over six miles, and in 35 minutes. It was a very high-caste day's sport, and scent rather contradicted received notions,

for heavy rain was overhead, and by 4.30 it descended in torrents, and maintained its diluvial character till next morning (by all accounts, a fearful night at sea). The ride to the metropolis is the least pleasant part of the outing; the road is generally rotten and filthy, and it is infested by carts driven recklessly by carters who do not belong to the Band of Hope.

The Kildare hounds met the same day at Sallins, and departed not from the programme of the last occasion, which I described at some length in these columns. Bellavilla Gorse, first drawn, sent out a very bold fox, who went over much the identical line of the other day, passing through Firmount, and thence on to the lands of Millicent. Here, however, he varied his performance by a plunge into the swollen waters of the Liffey at half flood; and, as it is not fordable for horses, and as the banks did not tempt the swimming centaurs, the field galloped to the two bridges in opposite directions—one at Clane, the other at Millicent—to effect a crossing, coming up with the pack eventually, who had taken their fox through Blackhall, and thence to ground at a point short of Straffan. Bishopscourt was next essayed. A strong breeze from the westward had risen by this time, and the field were as usual posted outside the little wood which skirts the gorse, and some hundreds of yards from the drawing place. Now this gorse is so sure a holder—thanks to Lord Clonmell's vigilant care—that, after a few moments suspense, Major Lawless set out to reconnoitre. All was blank and silent, and the hounds were steaming away fields off; the wind had drowned the bugle notes. However, the chase was not a long one, as the fox got to ground in a sewer near Mr. Hope's house. Palmerston was then drawn, and from it a stout fox issued without delay, and, jumping the park wall, led the field once more through Bishopscourt, and, strange to say, to the same sewer where his predecessor had gone for shelter. A wet ride home was the end of the day's proceedings.

Mr. Cosby, the master of the Queen's county hounds, has been

compelled for a few days to do his hunting from a carriage owing to a slight accident. From Coolnabacca they had a run (on Saturday, when their meet was at Terriogue cross roads), which looked as if it would have brought them to Stradbally Hall, but turned off through Lamberton, and thence on to thickets of Cremorgan. An afternoon fox rang the changes between Sheffield and Lamberton without much interest and excitement. On the 22nd they were at Blandsfort, and according to custom went first to Derryfore Gorse. A stout-hearted fox emerging from it went up the hills towards Cullenagh, thence downwards, till at last he got into a sewer at Ballyroan, after a slow pursuit of some 40 minutes. Sling was then drawn, and a fox forced out of it, when he ran a ring by Cullenagh, and after a rather tedious hour and 20 minutes got safely to Blandsfort.

The Louth hounds took to hunting again on the 14th. They found any number of foxes in Bragganstown, but did little with them; in the evening a fox was taken sharply from Woodtown to Bragganstown, but the ground was still too hard for safe riding. On the 16th they met at Julianstown, and found at Moserly; the fox took them by Ballygarth, into Dardistown, and was rolled over under Claremount, after a very good 26 minutes. A second fox was killed at Dardistown, without much sport; a third, found at Hilltown, led them over the Bradda River, by New Haggard, to Cooper Hill, eventually beating his pursuers into Dardistown. On the 18th they were at Oriel Temple, and found their first fox in Tenure Gorse. He ran over a very stiff line, by Conless into Collon, round the demesne, and got to ground: a very pleasant 20 minutes. Several foxes turned up in Painstown Gorse; settling on one, the hounds hunted him by Rathcoole, Rathescar, Dronine, over by Tubberderry, and Richardstown, to Stakillen, where, dead beat, he crawled into some old buildings, from which he could not be dislodged; this was a very fine run of 1 hour 20 minutes, over a wide extent of country, and attended with much grief.

The Kildare hounds on Thursday, the 23rd, were in their Athy district, but they did not stay there long, ascending soon to the higher latitudes of the Moat of Ardskull Gorse, which has never been visited in vain this year. To-day, however, it was blank, so they trotted on to Mr. La Touche's coverts, visiting Nine-Tree Hill first, whence a fox emerged, took them by Narraghmore Wood, and got to ground after about a couple of miles. This latter fine wood seemed full of foxes, and, after a great deal of hunting up and down the rides and the fields about, one was induced to leave his brethren, and he gave a slow chase towards Bull Hill, near which eminence he found a burrow or refuge of some sort. The whole, or nearly all, of the country traversed to-day was close and intricate, and pursuers were constantly in the air.

Friday, the 24th, was a most popular and alluring meet had the weather been even moderately propitious; but wind storms and rain storms alternated with fearful violence up to about 12.30, and the wonder was rather that there was any field at all than that it did not attain the usual proportions of a Dunlavin festa. The lady pursuers, however, seemed utterly regardless of weather influences, for they mustered in strong force—Mrs. Tynte and party, Mrs. Moore, the Miss Purcells, Miss Kilbee, and Mrs. Allen, and I fancy one or two besides—showing by visible signs and tokens that the native hue of resolution is not sicklied over or enamelled over by cunning priestesses of the Rachel creed. Among the more distant pilgrims to these fox haunts may be mentioned Lord Cloncurry and his brother, Lord Clonmell, and the Hon. Capt. T. Scott; while the Hon. H. Bourke had actually forsaken the pleasant pastures of Meath for these higher table lands and less regular fences. He was riding a horse of great power and some pedigree (for his father was Mr. Henry Chaplin's Gavazzi), and one of those few horses who seem perfectly at home in any country, and good and safe in all. A few of his recent transitions in jumping experience have been

rather abrupt—for instance, from Leicestershire to Meath, from Meath to Kildare and Wicklow. He cannot be called shapely or fashionable, though workmanlike, and reminded me somewhat of a monitor on four legs; but power, good will, and capacity were all his. Round hats were the fashion of the morning, for anything tall was pretty sure to be lifted off your head.

The usual order of things was somewhat departed from, Copelands Gorse being the first point of visitation. The hounds made no sign, so we crossed the country to Cryhelp Gorse, a bleak, shelterless spot, without tree or bush in sight. Here the hounds found soon, but had some difficulty in making him break from his warm snuggery. At last he is off, and in a capital direction, the initial fields and fences seeming to indicate that he may be the identical good fox who ran so stoutly and so fast last year to the ravine near Ardenode; but something turns him presently, and he faces a *mitraille* of rain, wind, and hail, such as we seldom encounter in this climate and temperate zone. Across two roads, and over large grass farms, we are presently checking repeatedly in the wide pasture fields of Canny Court, which one would fancy a very perfect medium for scent, but they were not so to-day; and after meandering over these large fields, and occasionally jumping and scrambling over some banks which were more like military earthworks in point of size, we had to give him up, while he was probably repairing the damages of wind and rain and dirt to his dainty fur robe. Logatrina was the next draw, but the covert was too thin to count on to-day for a certain find, and fox was not in it; so we went to "the Bowery," a few gorsy hills surrounded by a deal of swamp and snipe ground. From the second or third of these hills issued a beautifully marked fox, taking the higher line up to Logatrina, and showing himself to everybody. The hounds were so near him, that of course there was no lack of scent, and for a couple of miles over the grass he was bustled along sharply enough till we came to the Gormanstown Road, and no amount of ingenuity

or assiduity in casting ever gave us his clue again. It was not by any means a pleasant holiday, but Young Ireland, mindful how soon six weeks slip by, was improving the occasion, and cobs and ponies diversified the field. None looked more like a miniature hunter than a grey or cream roan, ridden by Capt. Gresson's son—*multum in parvo*, if ever a name was apposite. Hatfield was then visited, a beautiful gorse, but with one side inclining towards swamp and mere; and, unfortunately, the fox who had this aristocratically-named spot for his dwelling place chose this watery and sedgy path for the first stage of his journey, which brought him to the Bowery Hills. From this point the gallop was almost a *fac-simile* of the last, and ended at much the same point; for, though Will Freeman and Major Lawless had been very strong in their opinion as to the place where the Bowery fox got to ground in one of the Logatrina fields, some other authorities were equally negative, on the strength of some oracle of the pack making a line beyond the road. The fact, however, of number two fox selecting it as his refuge confirms the original impression. At this point the Christmas festivities, which include even that puir de'il the fox in the universal "good-will," make a blank of two days (for Sunday follows Christmas Day) in our Kildare chronicle.

On Monday, the Kildare hounds resumed their campaign against the fox species, and met a most plethoric field (I do *not* hint at the plethora being occasioned by too much roast beef, boiled turkey, or plum pudding) at the eighteenth milestone. It was a very perfect hunting day; foxes abounded wherever sought for—at Punchestown, Eadestown, and Elverstown; hounds ran extremely fast; but very imperfect earth-stopping marred the sport of the day from being either a great success or a well-merited triumph. As, however, I find I have to give an outline of some days' hunting in Meath and Westmeath before closing this bundle of notes, I must postpone my narrative of the proceedings of foxes, hounds, and the huge conglomeration of

mounted men, women, and boys, for another week. There were a great number riding; perhaps there was nearly an average of a fall apiece. But turning to Western Meath on the 22nd, this pack was busy at Mr. Rochfort Boyd's park (Middleton Park), one of the finest natural strongholds of foxes in Westmeath, not often surpassed in fox attractions in Ireland. The morning was very tempestuous, which will propably account for hill and bog coverts being drawn blank to-day. At Lilliput was their first find, and after ten minutes a storm vetoed all chance of hunting *that* fox. Rochfort and Carrick were blank, and a very small field persevered on till Gaybrook was reached. Here the find was instantaneous, the departure equally summary, and the line, a beautiful grass one, led over Catherinestown to Gainstown. Here some sheep foiled the line, and caused the hounds to check; but Will Mathews (the huntsman) held them on over the Mullingar Road, and, hitting it off brilliantly, had them racing through Gurten to Lynberry (Sir Walter Nugent's), which was the terminus. No one, I believe, saw much more of this fast 25 minutes than Miss Campbell.

On the 24th this pack met at the Bridge of Downs, and found a leash of foxes at Cooksboro'; one they sent through the bottom lands towards Killynon, but, headed at the road, he ran up wind and very fast, by the Loughnagar racecourse to Knockdrin, through the hill plantation there, and ultimately to ground at Cooksboro'. Lisnabin was blank to-day, and Clonlost, Col. Nugent's residence, was then visited. Among the attractions here, the cold and hungry will be sure not to leave out *Irish stew*, if they do in writing or speaking anent it; they certainly did not show lack of zeal as valiant trenchermen. After the run on the good things, an old fox turned up; rang round the house plantations once, then passed Reynella to Edmonton, and was pointing for Williamstown, when, owing to darkness, the hounds were stopped after running 30 minutes.

The sequel of the week in Meath is on this wise. On the

22nd they met at Newhaggard, and had a very fast ring from Trimbleston, as if for Meadstown, but they lost their fox near Moynet. On the 23rd they were at Allenstown (the master's), and before the hounds were all in covert a fox was viewed away across the railway, pointing for Headfort; but, turning to the left, he rang back to Allenstown *viâ* Charlesfort, and, after a great deal of park hunting, was given up on the hill of Faughan. Rathmore, the next draw, always proves a success. In a few minutes the field are galloping over a fine grass line towards the Hill of Ward, in the teeth of a strong breeze. A turn to the left gave the fox the benefit of the wind, and he got back to his gorse by Meadstown, though he was not permitted to dwell a moment there; on through Brady's farm (well known for its numerous bogs and deep ditches), over a river which could be flown or skimmed, through Milltown, into Allenstown, thence by the Decoy, past the house and through the park, over the rails, and on towards Martry, when, after 2 hours 5 minutes, darkness came on apace, and hounds had to be called off. (I believe I ought to have included Mr. Dunville among the flyers of the Meath Hunt in their first very fast gallop on Tuesday.) On Friday they met at Rosmead, but, finding nothing there, drew Southhill with effect, forcing their fox through Rosmead, and back to his old quarters, when he got to ground. In Ballinlough they found a second, who gave them (as I am assured by a very good judge of hunting, who has held the horn himself) a fast and most enjoyable ring through Killure; time 20 minutes. This wound up the week.

January 8th, 1876.

Christmas-tide brings its influxes of visitors, returns of prodigal sons, and slaughter of not only fatted veals, but of entire bullocks. We feel and acknowledge its pervasive influences even in the

hunting field. I do not mean that our bosoms' lords sit unusually heavy on their wonted thrones, owing to delusive ideas that we old boys were really boys again, with the stomach of a condor, the digestive apparatus of an ostrich. I mean rather that there is an expansiveness in the season, that numbers seem somehow to be multiplied indefinitely, and that elements, foreign for two if not three months to the hunting field, are now to be seen, heard—aye, and sometimes felt—there. *Ludit favis emissa juventus.* The cells alluded to there are for the nonce our public and private schools, which have literally overflowed our land—Eton, Harrow, and I know not how many more, sending us a cloud of light horsemen. Ponies are in the ascendant, and small, lithe, light, active nags, not too hard to hold, and that know something about hunting. Then sisters, if not mounted themselves, *must* come out in the family carriage to see how their brothers and cousins get along on their hunters. Mammas, grandmammas, aunts, and the usual stay-at-homes acknowledge the infection; in fine, every one's business and pleasure is to make a survey of the hounds and their followers.

What wonder if a very popular and most easily accessible tryst of the Kildare hounds, situated among many large hospitable and expanding houses, easily reached by rail from the metropolis, within a nice five-mile canter of the Curragh and Newbridge, and also open to pursuers from the Queen's county and Kilkenny, should have drawn as by magnetic impulse a very vast crowd of driving and riding people to congregate together close by a small public-house and a milestone marked 18 on the old Dublin and Cork mail-coach road. As for the carriage and car people, I should despair were I to sit down and give anything like a *catalogue raisonné* of half of them; but it was a pleasure to many out to see Mrs. Moore, of Killashee, who has been invalided for some time, once more enjoying herself on wheels. Among the riding ladies the Ladies Bourke were well mounted; so is always Miss O'Kelly; but Mrs. More

O'Ferrall, on a very dark brown horse of seemingly perfect paces, detains the scribe for a moment, first because I think it is about her first appearance in Kildare's hunting grounds on horseback; and, secondly, because the manners and high caste of the horse challenge something more than a momentary or cursory glance. The Miss Beaumans are well mounted; Miss Kilbee is on her good chestnut (a most perfect huntress); and Miss May Moore has the benefit of the pilotage of Furley and Revenge and Scots Grey's recent helmsman (I regret to say she got cannoned against in the first run, but was not hurt seriously). Young Ireland was chiefly represented by sons of the Baron de Robeck, the late Earl of Mayo, Mr. W. Forbes, Capt. G. Gresson, and the Messrs. Kennedy. All things come to end, even the compliments of the season, whatever they may mean—a point on which I have never been fully instructed, and rather fear now to inquire; but, if they meant congratulations, hearty good wishes, sincere regrets, all more impressed with a *con amore* stamp and ring than is usually uttered, there was good store of them, enough to flavour the coming year with their perfume and aroma! The season itself had been most complimentary to the hunting world of Ireland. After all the rain and storms, two days, which might have been red-letter days in spring's calendar, came to dry up the soppy earth and give a feeling of mildness and balminess to the atmosphere. The third, the day I write of, was not perhaps quite so lovely as its predecessors, but withal beautifully soft and mild, though rain appeared imminent, borne on the rising wings of the west wind. It was a day when scent ought, according to received axioms (axioms which, however, each returning year sees often flatly contradicted) to be all in the ascendant. Everything socially, as well as venatically, seemed dipped in rosy hues,—well, perhaps, except the crowd; but a burning scent and a straight-running fox would, in all probability, weed that to more manageable proportions.

A few minutes past eleven o'clock, the huge *cortége*, a moving mass of black, white, and red, is trotting along that by-road which leads such vast numbers each recurring April to the undulating plains of Punchestown; but before they reach the margining fields of that good hippodrome, the hounds and their satellites turn off a field or two to the left, to try a little covert known as Killashee Gorse, which used to be very much affected by foxes, but which shrewd men in the neighbourhood say they have rather forsaken for a quiet gorsy ravine not far off, that hounds seldom visit, and is not fenced or enclosed in any way. Be that as it may be, hounds made no sign there this morning; so the next scene transfers us to the corner of Punchestown Gorse; and, as a small wicket (postern that has, I fear, heard many a malison, articulate or only half-suppressed, as pursuers got jammed against the posts, or received bite or kick from vicious neighbours who dislike squeezing) is the only ostensible exodus for the mounted mass if the fox of our hopes and expectations break as he ought, if a sporting tod, to break—in a northerly or eastern direction towards the lower tiers of opposite hills, or up the run-home of the racecourse, past the grand stand, and so on, say, to Palmerstown or Bishopscourt—the immediate neighbourhood of the aforesaid wicket is consequently a coign of vantage not to be lightly forfeited. The visitors of the day seem to be well aware of its importance as a starting point—for here are to be seen the Hon. Harry Bourke on a blazed-faced young brown horse, a son of that good hunting sire the Knave of Hearts; Mr. John George Adare, equally at home in High Leicestershire or the highlands of his native Queen's county; and Mr. Hamilton Stubber, who seldom appears on anything but a high-class stamp of hunter. Mr. Watson, whose more recent hunting experiences have been on the Pau Hill slopes, is also handy on a very workmanlike-looking blood chestnut. But the gorse is a big one, and takes a deal of drawing, and time and patience were ebbing away among the impatient. By way

of interlude a side fence—a small bank well lined with quicks—tempts the larkers. The example is contagious, and one or two very ridiculous-looking passages of arms and legs occur. At last hound music catches the ear, swelling to a jubilee, and away the fox goes hillwards, as the lifted caps tell us. The fields of Punchestown are not small, the gaps and gates handy, and a short half-mile is crossed at a gallop ere a serious obstacle arrests the impetus. Those who incline to the extreme left—with whom I cast in my lot—when they look back from a bit of rising ground have the satisfaction of seeing that the fox has swung round to the right, completely away from his first impulse, and that hounds are racing away at tremendous pace. The field are not so fortunate. Here is one large division completely arrested in their career. Wire, by Jove! and no nippers in the crowd! *Pudit hæc opprobria dici, et dici potuisse et non potuisse refelli.* 'Tis a wire cage I vow, as the country I scan—a shame and disgrace to each Kildare man! A little further there is a great scattering and disorder among them. Yonder Mr. Harry Bourke is skimming over a slanting paling with a ditch on the far side, an evidence that wire need not be so universally applied as some seem to imagine. The chase seems leading inevitably to Stonebrook or the Mount Cashel banks; but a bit of moory ground, full of heather, which the Baron de Robeck has extensively planted, arrests the tide for a bit, and gives our fox short breathing space. Dwell he cannot, as scent serves so well; so he swings round again, to the joy of the slower or less fortunate of the pursuers, who now take their place in the van; and in a very few minutes he is underground in a burrow near the point he started from. The grief in this run was great; the pace was very good at times, and the fences, saturated with the recent snow and rains, were rottener than usual. Two ladies suffered, but not seriously.

After this we trotted on a rising road to Eadestown's happy little gorse, which must be wonderfully well preserved, as it

has very little lying, and is not far from several roads, but is seldom without a leash of foxes. I do not know how many were turned out of it to-day. One broke handsomely towards Athgarrett Hill, followed by the pack, with Mr. R. Kennedy master of a good lead, by jumping a thick bullfinch, followed by a well-known hard pursuer; but he turned back directly, and had to be forced out again, when he crossed the Blessington Road. swept over Mr. Melia's farm, and seemed bound for Bishopscourt or Arthurstown, when his career of swiftness and every one else's came to a full stop among the ruined remains of a gentleman's place known, I believe, as Newtown (a misnomer for many years); and, as this has been the terminus of not a few promising gallops from Eadestown, it is hoped that the earth-stoppers' attention wil be earnestly directed to the sewers and drains of Newtown. Up another tier of hills, and we are on the tableland of Elverstown, surveying one of the finest gorses I know of, which clothes a large ravine and two hill slopes with magnificent fox lying. The find here was quick, considering the extent of covert—the departure sharp and unhesitating; it was in the direction of the bleak-looking chapel, and the line seems to point for Downshire. A grey horse (Mr. O'Kelly's) is cutting out the work over furry banks and ragged-looking fences, while among those nearest, riding in his old style on a fine welter chestnut, is Mr. David Paleyt, the eminent veterinary surgeon, who a few years ago was about the best heavy man who followed this pack, and whose feat of leaping the Russboro' Park wall into a road a good many feet below him has had few parallels for daring success. He is unfortunate to-day—his first of hunting for some years, I think—as at a drop fence, stone-faced I believe, he got rather a heavy fall. But the fox has turned from his hill emprise, and is now sweeping towards the vale. Follow your pilots, strangers, for wire is stretched here for nearly half a mile, and if you don't cut it you must outflank it, and then you will find yourself galloping through a fine grass farm, leaving a quaint old cemetery to the

left, and in another mile and a half you will be once more alongside of Punchestown Gorse, where you began the day. Nothing more was made of this fox, though I heard he was seen *en route* for Tipper or Kerdiffstown.

I think I chronicled a good Westmeath gallop from Gaybrook to Lynbury, 25 minutes, and a capital line and good sport from Cooksboro' and Clonlost on the 24th.

On Tuesday, the 28th, the Meath hounds were announced by the card as meeting at Kilmessan, and, as a leisurely train starts from the Broadstone terminus at ten minutes past nine o'clock, and the distance is somewhere near a score of miles, a reasonably sanguine expectation may be formed of reaching your terminus in time to see the gathering together of men and horses at the trysting place, seeing that Kilmessan village is close to the station. Let me speak in grateful terms of the bridge which carried me safely and slowly (*festina lente* is the motto of the line, or might be) backwards and forwards over those miles interesting only in a hunting aspect, and not then till Dunboyne has been reached and you part company with the lugubrious, melancholy canal, along the banks of which the metals run for some distance. From that village onwards the eye can range over no finer hunting grounds, the apparently limitless expanses of flat pasture lands being only relieved by occasional undulations, which, save in a flat district, could never be dignified by the title of hills. It is always a pleasant thing to find an *entente cordiale* 'twixt church and hunting state, and such seemed to reign in this part of Meath. In a corner of the rectory lawn the bitch pack were standing at ease, sitting at ease, and lolling at ease, graceful in all attitudes, and evidently on the best of terms with Macbride and his acolytes, while Mrs. Briscoe, the rector's wife, was preparing to drive a large party of ladies out in her carriage to see the fun. Of the celibate clergy, not a few were on horseback, and one had a grey cob under him that a Leicestershire prior in the olden time might have envied. There was not a large meeting by any means; the

Dublin train had not brought any great array of pursuers (among them Mr. John Brook, Mr. Charles Hamilton, Captain Jacobson, of the Carabiniers, Captain the Honourable E. Boscawen of the Coldstreams, Mr. Hone, and perhaps one or two more) ; nor was their anything like an unwieldy or unmanageable field, such as I last saw with this pack in the vicinity of Dublin. The small change of conversation was principally relative to yesterday's fine run of upwards of an hour (it was from Bengerstown), ending with a kill in the open and Mr. Pepys's severe fall. But we are now galloping through some wide grass fields, and presently are drawn up on one side of Meath's best, or nearly her best, gorse—Kilcarty. It presents no remarkable feature; but if the fox breaks in a westerly direction, as he is intended, the first obstacle encountered is a double of rather large dimensions, which *must* be done, as gap or gate there is absolutely none in sight, no by-road available. While they are drawing let us glance at some of the cavalcade, and among them four or five really fine weight-carriers catch the eye: a chestnut, ridden by a heavy farmer; Mr. Dunnes's bay horse, seemingly master of any weight, well mannered, and full of liberty. Mr. Hare, of the county Cork, is on a rare old-fashioned light bay that Mr. Jorrocks, if in a dispendious mood, might have coveted to replace Artaxerxes, for there certainly *was* some family likeness about quarters and tail. Colonel Frazer, V.C., who is still pursuing on wheels, has mounted his friends from his fine stud. Mr. Murphy, of Braemount, has a good-looking substantial horse under him, while his son is riding a steeplechase celebrity. Mr. Campbell is, as usual, well-mounted; so is Mr. Brown—and both want weight carriers. The Honourable Harry Bourke is riding a powerful, old-fashioned bay horse, whom I recognised as having carried Lord Suffield well to the front in a good Kildare runsome two seasons ago, when his lordship and Earl Spencer had about the best all through of a very sharp pursuit (protracted till very late). He has since, I believe, done yeoman service in Leicestershire, and his present owner has happily rechristened him

"Lord in Waiting." I saw him do a dangerous sunk fence and one or two banks in the course of the day, in a style which convinced me that he had not lost his Irish form under English stable management (good horses rarely do). Mr. A. M'Neil is on a lengthy bay horse, a remarkably free mover and bold fencer. Captain Tuthill is riding a very fine, compact chestnut. These are a few of the biggest plums apparent in the day's pudding. Among the *dii minorum gentium* as to weight, Lord Langford is on his very neat Lucky Star horse. Captain C. Ponsonby is on a very perfect-looking chestnut, well-known, I believe, in Kilkenny. The two Mr. Butlers are, *of course*, riding good hunters; so are, equally of course, Messrs. French, Trotter, and Kearsley. Captain Dundas—who has, I hear, a large stud at Navan—rode a sharp iron-grey. Mr. Morris rode another of the same colour that I fancied more. Mr. Roberts was on the neatest of cobs. The M.F.H. is riding a bay much over his weight, and taller than his usual stamp. Mr. J. Brook's thoroughbred bay looks capable of faster work than to-day's journeyings. The Honourable Colonel Crichton and Captain Boscawen ride very high-class horses. But the covert is well nigh drawn, and nothing more gamy than a woodcock has been disturbed from its recesses. The hounds are tumbling up the bank. Ichabod! the glory of the day is gone! Vamos! Swainstown is the *mot d'ordre*, and thither we trot, with much-diminished anticipations and subdued hopes. In Ireland, short cuts are *de règle* (specially in short days), while bridle gates are an institution hitherto unknown, or only known in favoured places. Peradventure, if his Grace of Beaufort were sent to admininister the government of this island, such a revolution in the highways and by-ways might be affected; till then I see no prospect of adequate hunting facilities for Ireland. So it seemed quite natural for everybody to turn off a road and jump over a fence that in many counties would be called a "yawner." Some jump clean and featly, some scramble, some lead, but nearly all effect a passage. Meanwhile, when about a mile from Swainstown House

and Park, up jumps a fox out of a hedge—perhaps the Kilcarty tod we have been questing for vainly. The pack are on to him directly, and he leads us over a series of bottom lands intersected by deep drains—in one of which, I think, Mr. Barnewall (one of Meath's hardest men, I am told) took soundings—till we came to the foot of a hill in or by Dunsany Park, known as the Hill of Glane, when he swung round, ran a line nearly parallel to Swainstown, crossed a railway, and finally hid himself in a burrow outside Dunsany Park, having led us a twisting, devious course, and over a country certainly not up to the Meath average. The pace was good for a bit, while the hounds were close to their game; but the charm of going one knew not whither was all awanting in his pursuit, which was well-nigh marked by a painful incident, as Mr. Kearsley's horse—a flippant-jumping, active chestnut—slipped at a nasty up-bank, stone-faced, and rolled him over among some stones on the far side, gruesome to contemplate. He was riding again, however, in ten minutes.

The next stage is interesting only in an æsthetic point of view. We are in full view of Dunsany, a fine old baronial keep; while, hard by and almost opposite, is Lord Fingal's park. Beautiful bits of scenery catch the eye, but we cannot linger over them, specially as we found no Park Wood foxes to-day; and we must hurry on to Killeen Gorse, situated about a short mile from Dunsany, with a fair country facing its northern front. Much of the gorse has recently been cut down, so we were not long in drawing or finding a good sharp fox, who ran at great pace over a mile or so of what seemed half park, half farm, till he, too, beat the hounds into a neighbouring woodland; but whether he got to ground or was lost I cannot aver confidently. There was little jumping, but a very fine Marquis horse, with a gift for rearing perpendicularly, emptied a good saddle. We are next drawn up outside a very beautifully-situated gorse, Gerrardstown, which has a lovely expanse of green fields to the north and east, though the parks I spoke of, about a mile distant, wall in the other side of the

horizon. Two foxes broke from it; one ran over the inviting line, but the hounds are tied to the other, and his track for thirty or forty minutes lay between gorse and woodland—woodland and gorse. At length he was forced out of this cunning groove, and on my return towards Kilmessan the last glimpse I got of the Meath hounds and field was checking in the open, *en route* apparently to Dunshaughlin, Messrs. Harry Bourke, Trotter, a man on a string-halty grey, and one of the whips along with them. *Apropos* of greys, I forgot to say that no one seemed going better or enjoying himself more in the first gallop than the huntsman of the Bellinter harriers, J. Suter, on one of their many clever greys.

On the 29th the Kildare hounds were at Tinoran cross roads. They drew the Hill Gorse, found at once, and, driving their fox over the Baltinglass Road, sent him on at about best pace towards Ballinure. The field was extremely small, reinforced by Carlow men of the vicinity, and of the whole number but few got away well and rode to hounds. Of these few the numbers were reduced by two boggy-sided brooklets, and after a mile or two some seven or eight, I believe, alone held their own with the hounds, who, passing by Bessina and the Grange crossed the bog brook (so well known and dreaded near Knockrigg), and sweeping along under the shadow of Ballyhook Hill, reached Mr. Nolan's farm. In one of his pastures they flashed over their now thoroughly beaten fox, who was presently tallied by a lady, and very soon rolled over. It was 40 minutes from find to finish, and those nearest say the hounds never faltered for a moment. The brush was handed to Miss Kilbee, who with her father had got off in front, and stayed there throughout. Among their companions were the master, Mr. Stewart Duckett; Will Freeman; Mr. Blacker; a Limerick pursuer, Mr. Rose; Mr. Fortescue Tynte, and Mr. Forbes, till engulfed in brook or bog on the landing side of a large double. Ballyhook was next drawn, the hill gorse which the Tinoran fox would probably have essayed if he

had dared to face the steep hill side leading to it. A fox broke from it, pointing for Stratford, and got as far as the Gorsy field, when he swung round to the right, and ran by Golden Fort into Knockrigg Gorse, where he was soon devoured. A second from this gorse bolted incontinent, and, running a short semi-circle, got to ground in the well-known sewer at Golden Fort. Thus ended an extremely short day, with an unusual amount of sport compressed into its two or three hours. No one could say, *Heu nimis longo satiate ludo*, as probably the majority got home to luncheon, or a little after it.

The splendid run of the Carlow hounds on the previous day was the universal theme of conversation. Narrators made its length twenty miles, but, whether more or less, it covered an immense extent of country; and the fact of taking a fox through the coverts of the next county, and killing him fairly in the open, always adds zest and *éclat* to a pursuit. (Hounds left off well nigh twenty-five miles from their kennels.) I hear it began from Castle Dermot Gorse, leading to the Kildare stronghold of Sheriff's Hill, through that without pausing to Davidstown, and on to Hughestown Hill, then twice round Corbally Hill, from that round Tinoran Hill (I fear I am not quite precise), ending in a kill in the open, in a field near Golden Fort. Some six or seven, I hear, finished this extraordinary run well—Mr. Watson, M. F. H.; Sir C. Wolsey, Bart.; the two Messrs. Bunbury, and Mr. Fenton.

From the United Hunt (Cork) comes the pleasant burden of very good sport. On the 25th, for instance, this pack met at Modeligo, and found numbers assembled. The gorse was vacant, the plantations held, and after a ring, the fox broke away over a line which soon put a wide gap between hounds and horsemen. For fully five miles the former had all the best of it, and the fox must have been in dire distress when he reached Carrysville, where the earths were strangely open, and wire prevented the huntsman from getting to the pack. On the 22nd they were at Dunkettle, but a tempest stopped all sport. On the 24th, however,

they had a very fast four miles to ground at Churchtown from the Strand Road covert.

Sir David Roche has had a good share of sport since the embargo was taken off. Thus, on the 22nd a Knockaderry fox took them through Ahylin covert, and thence for five miles at express pace to ground. The same afternoon Ballingarry Gorse produced a brace. The hounds slipped away with one over the vale towards Castletown, thence to Knockfierna, over the Black Hills, when scent got low for a bit; but the bitches, brought to their noses, worked their fox gallantly over the hill to warmer scent down below, forcing him into a sewer in Mr. Christie's farm, after fully eight miles, Irish measure, all fast save one bit. The next day they had another good run from Liskennett to Croom Gorse.

The Kilkenny hounds met at Ballyhale on the 22nd, and began with a pleasant ring from Killeen to ground; the second fox, found at Kiltorken took them over the metals, by "Sir John's Gorse," and got refuge in a cleft of a rock near Knoctopher.

On the 24th, Bonnetstown was the tryst, and, being near the city, it was fully attended by holiday folk as well as *habitués*. Knockroe was the first find, the fox pointing for Sutcliffe's Gorse; but, forced by cur dogs and footpeople, he turned for Bonnetstown, and was eventually lost, though most patiently followed from field to field for some time. From Troy's Wood a good fox led them very fast to Dunningstown, and back to the banks of the Nore, where he got to ground.

On the 27th, meeting at Norelands, they found a brace of foxes at Bryan's Gorse, chivying one so fast through Lord Carrick's park, that they turned him over, a fine old dog fox, in seventeen minutes. In Summerhill Gorse they found, and ran a fast ring towards Ballylinch; but the fox got so repeatedly headed here, that the master ordered them on to Bishopslough, from which a stout fox took them along by Castlefield, over a wide brook—where an ex-M.F.H. disappeared under water—by the village of Dunganan, and through the large grass farm of Bramblestown, whence

he swung round to his starting point, reaching it after a very fast forty-five minutes, of which some five or six and the huntsman alone saw the end.

I hear the Queen's county hounds have suspended hunting for some days, in tribute to the memory of Lord de Vesci, and that the last day they were out in the vicinity of Athy (here they join Kildare), they found plenty of foxes at Popefield, Kilmaroney, etc.; but anything like good scent was denied them.

I hear that a stag from Lord Kenmare's park ran for upwards of twenty miles before Mr. Gubbins's staghounds last week; but I should fancy the mileage was only an estimate, without detracting from a very fine pursuit over a large tract of country.

The Kilmessan day in Meath was not brilliant or satisfactory. Much was anticipated, little was realised. The two following days, however, made ample amends to those who follow this pack through good report and ill report—to fashionable fixtures and the reverse.

Thus on Wednesday they were at Archerstown, the residence of Sam Reynell, long the popular M.F.H. of this pack, whose genial hospitality is well-known in Ireland, and has been experienced by many a score of pursuers (some of whom will probably read these notes), active or passive, in India, in England, on the waves that Britannia rules somewhat fitfully now—wherever, in fact, our flag floats. His retirement into less active life was marked by such a testimonial as has, I believe, never fallen to the lot of a master of foxhounds before. Kilgar Gorse is close by his house, and of course under his tutelage, so praise or description would be superfluous. It is very thick and takes careful drawing, and it was twenty minutes before a find was chaunted forth. In another five minutes the dog pack were driving a fine old fox through Archerstown towards Rosmead, thence by Miltown and Kibskyr Chapel, through the wide pastures of Clonabraney, through Lakefield, and so on to the top of Loughcrew Hills, where scent failed, and pursuit was abandoned, after one hour and

thirty-five minutes I believe. Macbride, Master Battersby, and the Hon. Harry Bourke on his Gamekeeper horse, were about the nearest all through. The next day—a lovely one—was at Summerhill, Lord Langford's fine park. There was an emigration thither from Kildare, and all the emigrants returned not only pleased, but rejoicing, at the fine sport they had, and the enormous amount of hunting they saw, the galloping and jumping over a peerless country; and yet on paper it reads as only moderate and indecisive—a ring from the hill covert at Summerhill of about ten or twelve minutes; a second fox taken on towards Pratt's Gorse and lost; then the good fox turns up, and the latter runs towards the Kildare territory, making stages at Agher and Larchfield, and working round to Garradice covert. I am told that the hunting of the pack through all this country, with very catchy scent and a fox a good deal in front of them, was simply perfect. Whether it was the same fox that issued from Garradice I know not, but one certainly took them along from it towards Culmullen, but whether killed or lost or sent to ground I cannot say.

The Kildare hounds were at Castletown on Saturday. The west wind had swept the island and bowed the trees all night long, and was in full career still by 10 or 11 A.M. A sort of day when a speaking trumpet was almost necessary at shortest distances. An *enormous* crowd was congregated at Castletown, and many of the most celebrated hunts in either country were represented on the lawn. The first stage of the day was not promising; a fox from the Home Woods ran down wind over a good line nearly to Carton, the Duke of Leinster's residence, turned back, and was perforce abandoned. A green lane, soon ploughed into softness by the cavalcade, takes us to Cullen's Gorse. Here there were a brace of foxes; one was chopped incontinently (I think we drew it up wind); the other broke handsomely—a vixen, judging by her size—and ran for a few fields as if Lodge Park or Ardrass was her destination; but by the time the Maynooth Road was crossed it was clear that Tagha-

doe was the haven steered for. A mile or so of fast galloping, with a widish brook or two to cross (Mrs. Benson was going very well at this stage), and we arrive at Taghadoe covert, though not till patience had been sorely tried at a gateway, the sole avenue to the little wood. Here there was a pause of a couple of minutes, while fox and hounds were doubling through the larch trees; then on the line goes over a very perfect bit of grazing country, largely and widely fenced, where a bold big jumper is indispensable; past Lady Chapel, over a couple of roads, and more wide pastures, till we appear to be riding in a track something like the letter S; past Mr. M'Conkey's farm, round by Mr. Comerford's fields, till, in storm and rain, we lost her. I have no notion of the time, as no one, I should imagine, had the temerity to look at his watch in such a tempest. At Lodge Park, if no fox was found, not a few, I believe, found something very comforting in the midst of such deluging rain as now set in. Major Barton's new gorse, so successful a few weeks back in the beginning of the snow period, was next visited, and after ten or fifteen minutes a fox broke from it, but, unfortunately, in apparently a wrong direction for the field, namely, towards the river Liffey, which was here not fordable, or barely so at one or two points. Our fox, however, did not plunge in, but kept on the bank, and was pushed along so sharply, that, after a little feinting, he broke boldly away towards Turnings, crossing a Mr. Wright's farm, where the gates were locked (even the entrance); and I think we owe it to the intrepid pilotage of Mr. R. Kennedy that we got out of this *cul de sac*, and I certainly for one acknowledge the debt I owe him. On then over a beautiful grass line, strongly fenced, parallel to the railway and canal, till our fox ran over the metals for a bit; then turned up at a point near Baron Rath, and, swinging towards the left made good his escape into either Boston or Lyons; the hounds when I left them were following the trail very slowly, as the fox had got a capital long lead after leaving the railway, one zealous pursuer having taken one-half the pack or rather more beyond this

point, and some delay having occurred in collecting them and clapping them on to the hounds who had turned with their fox. Considering the weather, this was a very enjoyable day's hunting, and the thanks of innumerable sportsmen are due to that plucky little vixen who faced the tempestuous wind in the earlierpart of the day. Down wind it was no easy task to make anything of a fox unless very near to him.

P.S. The subsequent hunting *fasti* of Ireland present no very salient features. Saturday, the *jour de l'an*, was kept holy and idle in Ireland generally, and most packs abstained from the molesting of foxes on that anniversary. On Monday Kildare was in strong force at Saggart village, which, though not a popular *réunion*, generally draws a considerable number of metropolitans, civil and military, as it is within easy hacking and driving distance from the capital. Among those who availed themselves of the fine warm morning were Hon. Col. and Mrs. Needham, Col. and Mrs. Chaplin, Mrs. Percy Grace (driving a smart pair of greys), Lord Ernest Hamilton, and Capt. Moore of the 12th Lancers. The events of the morning may be summarised thus: a ring from Tallaght Hill, the fox then driven down into the vale, hunted with catchy bad scent, viewed at Johnville, and rolled over ere he could regain his hill fastnesses. Coolmine blank, for a wonder; Kilteel ditto; a run began very auspiciously from Johnstown Kennedy, but spoilt by shouting rustics. *Finis.*

Johnstown Inn was their meet on the 4th, and the skeleton of events is somewhat like this: A good fox found at Kerdiffstown, sent along towards Old Town fast, and lost in a sewer or burrow not far from Forenaghts; a second taken from Bishopscourt Gorse by Pigeon Hill to Lyons, and lost soon afterwards; a third, hunted slowly from Boston towards Baron Rath, across a big country, over Oughterard Hill, through Cullen's Wood to Lyons, and I believe eventually to Boston.

A good gallop with the Louth hounds on the same day, of

which more anon; and a very animating chase with the Ward Union Hounds on Wednesday, with a stag, enlarged by the ninth milestone on the northern coach road.

January 15th, 1876.

The theme I propose to talk about or write about just now is a new phase of hunting experience—altered conditions of fox-hunting, a very different country, new and varied scenes, and new actors in the great and moving drama of fox life and death. And all this is attained by a railway journey of some fifty-odd miles, and no more fatigue and difficulty than is involved in spending three hours or thereabouts in a very comfortable, well-cushioned carriage on the Northern line—a most prosperous, well-to-do corporation, which is fully determined not to risk their stability or diminish their dividends by encouraging the Irish public to travel either too often by day, or at too headlong or reckless a rate of speed. By these acts, and by much judicious management—which my faith in directors tells me must exist, though my eyes and corporal vision fail to grasp it fully, or realise its pervasive presence—I hear this line has attained the maximum dividend of Irish railways. But, sporting peruser of these notes, if intent on following my erratic footsteps through this green isle, let me give you a word of counsel, and open the porches of your ears to what I am going to say. Avoid the 3 o'clock P.M. train especially on Sunday, unless you have strong sleeping proclivities—or, if in a very wakeful mood and bent on improving your mind, be sure to take your reading lamp with you—because when darkness sets in the chances are, if you are occupying a first-class carriage and want a lamp, you will be politely invited to degrade into one of the second-class, which seem more generally and habitually lighted—I suppose on the

principle that too much comfort and self-indulgence must be discountenanced by virtuous directors, and that, while comfort and ease are assured you in your first-class coach, sweetness (moderate) and light are granted you in a second. It will be a good thing, too, to travel with your own servant, unless you have a speciality for the Hamal business, seeing that porters are about as rare on this line as they are in Yankee Land, and hard to find when wanted as a Bobby in a London square where good areas and kind cooks abound.

Barring these little trifles, fifty-one miles from Dublin to Dundalk were done in about three hours, or seventeen miles an hour—not at all bad going for Ireland, and considering that stoppages were numerous, and that the politeness of Irish railway functionaries made it imperative, particularly at this festive season, to exchange the compliments of the season and the news of the week with their gossips and cronies on the way. I am told that there is one train on this line—the Limited Northern Mail—by which it is a positive pleasure to travel, so sustained is the speed, so few the stoppages between Dublin and Belfast. I merely relate my own experience. This line might be christened the Eastern Coast Line, for it hugs the littoral for many a mile, and in some places is apparently carried on an embankment literally through the sea. The branch which bears its many, many hundreds to the Peninsular games at Sutton three or four times each year, is well known to many on your side of the Channel; for the Howth and Baldoyle races are a sort of Derby, Ascot, Croydon, Kingsbury, Hampton, and Streatham, all rolled into one arena, and are vastly popular, and populous too. After Malahide, a rather fashionable watering-place, is passed, there is a prospect of very fine hunting country, principally grass, stretching away to the left. This is run over alternately by the red stags of the Ward Union Hunt—who seem to have occasionally here, as in Devonshire, an irresistible seaward impulse—and by the foxes of the Louth Hunt, for the latter claims part of Meath, I believe,

by prescription and long usage. Balbriggan is the Nottingham of Ireland for the production of stockings, and very conspicuous as you pass by are the Exhibition medals which Mr. Smyth, the enterprising proprietor of the factory, won at the chief shows of the world. Drogheda, which you see well from the viaduct—with its shipping and smoking tall chimneys—seems to have completely recovered the curse of Cromwell and the decimation which he inflicted on the inhabitants. From this point, so far as fast-growing darkness enabled me to judge, the land grows more hilly and to trend to higher levels. (There is a fair refreshment room here.) At last Dundalk, my terminus is reached; so farewell, railway: speed you well, fellow-passengers bound for what they call in Leinster and Munster "the black north." It is a *terra canibus negata*; so, unless some one leaves me a grouse mountain or a linen-yarn factory, I am not likely to visit it during the hunting or any other season, or ask the reader to accompany me thither. But I will beg him to put himself on an outside car or a stepping hack and come along with me to Lisrenny, the old family park of the Filgate family, where for some score of years the Louth hounds have been kennelled and presided over by W de Salis Filgate, who has, as I hear, shown small fields an amount of continuous sport that some more fashionable and more largely patronised packs might envy. Nor has the quality degenerated at all so far this season (rather the reverse); but the deaths of some of the oldest members of the hunt (including that of Mr. Filgate's own father, as I noticed in a recent letter), the cold snap—which visited Louth rather more severely, I hear, than many other hunting territories in Ireland, and retarded hunting for the best part of a fortnight—together with two or three days of abnormal storm and tempest, when men could not sit in their saddles or hounds attempt to hunt, have rather limited tfie amount enjoyed up to this period. Coming from Dundalk you will pass by Lord Louth's park and house, and near it is a cemetery, where a very neat monument, erected by the subscriptions of all classes

(principally the farmers of the district), attest the esteem in which another Mr. Filgate, a cousin of the M.F.H.'s, as I learned, was generally held in his native country.

Lisrenny House is a comfortable family mansion of no particular pretension or style: it is surrounded by vividly green fields which speak of richness and depth of soil, and the woods and plantations around hold good store of foxes and pheasants too. The kennels are thoroughly comfortable, but unambitious, and so healthy that I hear lameness is unknown there—I mean, of course, kennel lameness. Harry Hardy, kennel huntsman (for Mr. Filgate holds the horn of office himself), drew the hounds for me, showing them by litters, which enables a stranger to get a much better and quicker insight into the pedigrees and peculiarities of the sires and matrons and their offspring than any other plan which I wot of. It is a very small pack, the Louth, and must have a wonderful amount of stamina to get through its weekly toll of work; for, old hounds and young hounds, only thirty-three couple answer the roll call—and this includes one or two couple of ancients who have done the state good service in their time, and mean to do more vicariously through their progeny: the latter can of course only come out at the nearer fixtures. Under these circumstances it is clear that strength and substance is the desideratum in breeding for this pack. It has been attained without sacrificing speed, dash, or fashion in any material degree; in point of fact, out of sixty-six hounds there were only two or three that struck the eye as decided faulty, and these were so decidedly good in other respects that beauty and symmetry were sacrificed to sterling worth and working ability.

The entry of the season is singularly good-looking, and they are said to be very good in their work. Among them the black and white hounds, Vanity and Volatile, out of Bashful by Viceroy, are very level; while Voltigeur, of the same litter, has not much to my eye to recommend him. Viceroy, by Sir Watkin Wynn's Cardinal out of Vengeance, is a nine-season hunter, and

has done yeoman service to this kennel; and I saw him out next day as fresh and full of go as any two-season hound of the lot. Countess and Crazy, out of Cheerful by the Cambridgeshire Gransden, are very neat, true-shaped hounds, and the former will bear criticism the most rigid; while Affable's litter, sired by the Meath Beaufort, are all full of promise.

Among the two-year-olds, Vagrant, by Viceroy, own brother to Vanguard, who has done very well I hear in Meath, fills the eye; while Affable's litter by the Warwickshire Nestor is an extremely good-looking lot. Nestor came over with a great reputation, but he was old, nearly blind, and much worn, and he strayed away the night of his arrival, and died soon afterwards, which, since his sons and daughters grew up so taking in looks and good in the field, has been a source of great regret. Among the three-year-olds, Abigail, by the Warwickshire Wildboy out of Affable, is a very smart bitch; and Charon, her half-brother, is a giant, but level and true-made withal.

Royal and Rufus, by Mr. North's Random out of Chauntress, black and white ticked hounds, are a very good pair of brothers; the former so good and compact all round that he has been made a sire hound already. Lapwing, by Lord Fitzhardinge's Gainsborough, is a bitch of good character, but she was too shy to come out well in a competition examination on the flags. Among the five and six year olds the Warwickshire Brusher sired several useful hounds, but rather plain, Guider being the best of the family, so far as looks are concerned. Victory, a seven-year-old yellow bitch, is said to be wonderfully clever in plough, and for that reason she must be invaluable in Louth. With her my notice of the hounds must conclude.

In the stalls and boxes there are fifteen or sixteen strong useful horses to be seen, of the wear-and-tear stamp, but not at all level or uniform in appearance. Mr. Filgate's grey horse got the first prize at the last Dublin show in the 15-stone class, which, perhaps, was hardly worthy as a class to represent the weight-

carrying hunters of Ireland. There were one or two brothers and sisters of the laureated quadruped in the boxes; but, whatever their hunting merits may be, they were not equal in looks by many degrees to their stalwart brother. A roan of riper years and a young grey mare by Blythefield seemed to me the pick of the basket.

Within a stone's throw of the kennels, in a well-walled-in paddock, is a large T-shaped earth, and in it and about it are three pet foxes, one of whom, a very well-furnished tod, condescended to come out and be inspected.

On Jan. 4 the Louth hounds were due by the card at Clermont at 11 A.M. of the clock, and arriving there a few minutes past the trysting hour, Mr. Filgate and his lieutenants were to be seen surrounded by the pack, while a small field began to agglomerate in a very leisurely and un-*empressé* fashion. The day was beautiful and still, with a sun which some warmer-blooded mortals were rather inclined to gird at as too warm. I certainly could not feel any inconvenience from his rays, and should have liked them far more powerful. Clermont is a very extensive park, wooded with fine old timber, well preserved; its grounds undulate beautifully, and to the nor'-east it commands grand views of the Mourne and Carlingford Mountains; but it has no crownifig mansion or castle, for the lord of that name or title resides at a mountain place—Ravensdale—further in the interior, and a steward's house seems to be the only habitation visible among these wide spaces. Let us glance at the array before it has broken up, and while coffee-housing is in full vigour.

Conspicuous in front is the smartly-horsed coach of the Inniskillings, driven by Capt. Heaviside, who seems to have got over his bad accident. Most of his passengers have got on their horses, or are in the act of doing so; among them is the major, Billington, on a grand bay horse of much power and quality, whose thin tail flecked with grey hairs has been seen so often in the van in Kildare's green pastures. Capt. Mills is riding a very fine, powerful bay horse, who, if I mistake not, has been per-

forming recently with the York and Ainsty. Mr. Ellis is nicely mounted, and Mr. Thompson is on the *ci-devant* chaser, Anchorite.

Close by the Inniskilling drag is the Hon. Mrs. Ralph Smyth's carriage, drawn by a fine pair of bays, and well and fairly freighted. Capt. Ralph Smyth is hard by on the neatest of grey cobs, while not far off is the Rev. Dr. Townshend, on a very workmanlike grey cob, who, I hear, carries his reverend, genial, and popular master as safely over a country as if he were sitting in a hansom. Mr. Murray, of Dundalk, who is going round with a little bag collecting the white monie, is riding a fine low weight-carrying hunter that looks capable of much. Mr. E. Thornhill is on a bloodlike bay mare of power, that I think I recollect seeing Capt. Smith piloting (though not quite to victory) at Punchestown, while his brother is on a fast-looking chestnut that can claim Stockwell for his grandfather. Mr. Tom Richardson, who comes up somewhat late, is on a brown or black mare, who has all a huntress's shape and action. Mr. Jameson rode a roan up to a good deal of weight; but as they canter along nothing looks neater or moves better than Mr. Supple's grey mare, of a certain or uncertain age—"a good one to follow, a rum one to beat," if all they say of her be true. Mr. Tiernan seems well mounted, so does Mr. Carolan, while Col. Bellingham's light mare bears herself nicely; Mr. Filgate, jun., rides a stout grey, evidently clever.

It is a very small field, but well-mounted and workmanlike; every one appears to know every one, and cordiality and good fellowship seem the characteristics of the scene and company. But the half-crowns are collected, and already the hounds are busy drawing long belts of wood and plantation, which, though generally said to be holding, held not to-day; and, indeed, they looked too hollow for a sure find. Mr. Filgate evidently spends a good deal of his time with his hounds, for they know him thoroughly, and obey him eagerly, and there is no need for

rate, noise, or whipcord, for everything works apparently with the utmost smoothness and harmony.

Stevenstown, on the river Fane, is the demesne and residence of Col. Fortescue, late of the Royal Artillery. Its grounds slope down gracefully to the river, and there is a dense growth of laurel and shrubs. Here lived Mr. Matt. Fortescue, the father of the present proprietor, who was also the father of hunting in Louth, for he kept the county hounds for a generation or more, and did much in bringing them up to their present standard. Opposite to it, and separated by the trout-haunted Fane, is Fane Valley, the property of Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, whose varied pages of romance and biography have, I feel sure, beguiled many a pursuer in his idler hours; it is at present occupied (and right hospitably) by Capt. and Mrs. Ralph Smyth, in one of whose rooms you may see, if the hounds give you time, a full-length portrait of their relative, the poet Somerville, the classic author of 'The Chase.'

But the busy pack have already moved three foxes; they are settling down to one, and driving him at best pace past the house and shrubberies, and so on till the open is gained. For about half a mile it is a straight gallop till we come to some high tableland, and we approach a chapel known, I believe, as Knockbridge. Here our fox turns a bit to the right, and leads us a very fast dance over a series of small fields, bounded not by walls pure and simple, but a combination of wall, quickset, and bank, which might be flown with impunity by a free-going hunter, but which, if topped, has to be done with great judgment and precision. For about a mile the pace is very good and sustained, and, as much of the land traversed is soppy plough, horses begin to lather freely, and some look as if a check would be grateful. A check comes, but of very brief duration, and again we are moving briskly, but not so fast as at first, in a line nearly straight, and leading apparently towards the high smoking chimneys of the Dundalk factories in the valley below. At this

stage Capt. Mill's fine bay horse gets a bad cut from one of the sharp stones I referred to in the banks, which compels him and his owner to retire from the fray; and a similar mischance befalls Mr. Supple's good grey mare. The railway is now reached; a train is passing by, but does no harm to men, horses, and hounds; and the next obstacle is a small brook, with not the best of banks. Mr. Thompson, on Anchorite, gets over with a struggle, but his brother officer, Mr. Ellis, is not so fortunate, and his horse flounders away till two yokels come to the rescue. Mr. Byrne's fields are now passed, and we are confronted by the huge park wall of Lord Roden's demesne. The fox probably tried this and failed to scale it, then ran the road for some distance; at any rate, he was lost to scent here. From where we had found him it was probably fully five miles as we ran, to where we abandoned search, and part of this had been done at very good pace.

At Dundalk, I think, a good many migrated to luncheon fields, and did not reappear; but the hounds and a few followers went to a gorse close to Stevenstown, and there we had forty or fifty minutes of very busy and vocal woodland work, when our fox, dead beat, crawled into a very small burrow. A trot of a mile or more brought a very small party to Coolderry, a neat place, recently purchased, I hear, by Mr. Knaggs, who, though not a frequent pursuer, generally has a fox in his coverts, in spite of the presence there of some pheasants. A countryman greeted the master with the bloody tokens of recent rapine on the part of the fox we hoped to find, and expectation was strained every moment, as we drew the skirting belts of plantations, of seeing the hen-eater aroused from the jungle after the siesta with which we credited him this warmish afternoon; but it was the old story—a seen fox in the forenoon is seldom a found fox in the afternoon—so our questing was all in vain, and equally fruitless were the searches made in one or two patches of wild gorse unenclosed. The hours, nay the minutes, of daylight were

numbered when we came to Corballis, the late Mr. Lee Norman's very attractive demesne, and it was nearly all run through before the fox we wanted turned up. His course—a swift if somewhat circular one—was only closely followed, I believe, by Mr. E. Thornhill and the whip: it led by Glyde Court to Mr. Tiernan's house, when hounds were stopped from want of further light; and so ended a pleasant day's hunting, most of the *agrémens* of the chase being heightened by the absence of those ruffling aggravations which more populous and pretentious packs often bring in their train. There was no jostling, for there was ample space for all; no crowding at one particular spot in a fence, for, though not inviting of aspect, I must say the fences were regular, and as good or bad in one place as in another. An Englishman of considerable and wide experience in the world of agriculture told me he thought the farming in Louth particularly good. In one respect I can confirm by my own observation the correctness of this remark. In Galway, for example, where stone walls are the normal obstacle, the reason for their existence is made too apparent by your finding myriads of stones and rocks in many of the fields you traverse. In Louth—at least in the portion we rode over to-day—every fence bristled with nasty sharp-edged stones, like a larger and courser growth of slate; but in the plough or grass you galloped over, stones were quite the exception. Infinite labour must have been expended in clearing the fields of their stone crop so thoroughly. *Au reste*, in no part of Ireland that I have hitherto visited have I seen less painful contrasts of squalor of dwelling rubbing sides with magnificence and opulent habitations. The yeomen's houses and homesteads were trimly kept and substantial; the cottages less mouldy, mildewed, and decaying in their exteriors than one often sees. Of the pack I have spoken already, and I will only add that pleasanter hunt servants it would be very hard to find, or apparently more efficient in their several duties. I am told that my visit only introduced me to an inferior phase of Louth in a

hunting and scent-retaining point of view, and that towards Drogheda, and especially around the Collon Hills, a far wider tract of pasture land is to be met with. I will hope to visit these hunting grounds at no very distant date, more particularly if I can be assured on reliable authority that the fields are divided by more yielding materials than sharp-faced stones and pleached quick hedges.

I ought to have mentioned that the Inniskillings hunt the neighbourhood of Dundalk with a newly-acquired pack of harriers, of which Capt. O'Neal is the master. I hear they have shown good sport, and that the intrepid manner in which their master has stuck to them over the most unpleasant and dangerous country, often mounted on steeplechase horses of considerable value, is a theme of general admiration, not unmixed with wonder. I do not know whether the magnates of Louth are or are not enthusiastic supporters of their most creditable pack of hounds; but in one respect the county merits high commendation, in that spite of high farming and a high scale of civilisation, wire as fencing material seems comparatively unknown. *O si sic omnes!*

The sequence of hunting history was interrupted in Kildare by deference I believe, to the ceremonial law of times and seasons, seeing that Thursday, the 6th day of January, had some canonical aroma about it, which interfered with any other. Certain it is that a card was generally circulated, and every possible notoriety given to the change of fixture of the Narraghmore Courthouse meet from Thursday, the 6th, to the following Friday. Then, by a perverse dispensation of circumstance, there was a severely contested parochial election on the latter day, which depleted the field of some of its hardest and best elements.

However, the plaza of Narraghmore was fairly filled with brightly-clad and sadly-clad pursuers by 11 A.M., Carlow, as usual, sending one or two of her best mounted representatives to these border forays, for Narraghmore is in quite a corner of the Kildare territory, and "marches" on the Queen's county and Carlow. Lord Clonmell and his brother, Capt. Scott, were about

the most distant arrivals, as Bishopscourt cannot be very much less than a score of miles from the scene of action to-day. It is rather a neat village, Narraghmore, bright with whitewash, cleaner than its peers, and containing of course the usual elements of pothouse, courthouse, and police barrack—a trinity of functions which seem to revolve in a somewhat vicious circle. Straight roads, which might have been engineered by a French Vauban of the *Ponts et Chaussés*, so rigidly rectilinear are they, converge here from several points, and most of them are adorned by fine timber of more than average age and girth.

Modern as the village looks, it has a history which links it to a very remote and storied past. Here Leinster and Munster, in the third century, fought out a death feud, in which the latter fared ill. Near this point was held the Parliament of South Leinster. The manor, granted in the time of Henry II., gave its title to the Lord of Narragh. There was a manor house upon it, which shared the fate of so many mansions in 1798; it has never been rebuilt, and nothing now marks the locality as once the abode of "gentles" but a wood of seignorial character, divided by fine avenues of most ambitious pretentions, and rich in a very luxuriant growth of laurel and yew. The manor is the property of Mr. John Latouche, of Harristown, a former master of these hounds; and it would be quite superfluous to add that foxes are never lacking here, though some two years ago the stock was sadly diminished by some poison inadvertently set for marauding dogs in the lambing season by a farmer hard by. One of the best and longest pursuits known in Kildare had its point of departure in Narraghmore Wood, its terminus in Moore Abbey Park, and the vixen who led the hounds such a gallop was so peculiarly marked that she has often been identified since, and may be assumed to be the mother of many a fox in the woodland and its confines. The day was remarkable for having ushered in the most complete change of weather that in this variable and capricious climate we have for some time

experienced. Instead of winter lingering in the lap of May, we had a pairing and toying of January and June. Fires were partially suspended in sitting rooms in Dublin, and that rare phenomenon, an empty grate in a club coffee-room, was to be seen on the 6th. In the early morning of the 7th everything was changed; the slush and mud of the damp roads was frozen to a hard consistency, a thin film of ice coated the surface water, and a mistral from north and east pierced into all unguarded and assailable spots. By eleven A.M. there was some bright counter-balancing sun, but those who like myself had to drive some twenty odd miles before they got on their covert hacks can testify to the pronounced commencement of the cold snap.

Narraghmore Wood is a large one, and though the wide avenues I spoke of give pursuers unusual facilities for observation and getting away, still it is possible to be slipped; and so it happened to the majority to-day, some eight or so alone getting off satisfactorily with the pack, who found at once, and took their fox along from the lower end of the wood at a rattling pace, by Nine-tree Hill on the left, when he swung wide to the right and made the Moat of Ardskull; thence, sweeping down to the edge of a peat bog, ran through Black Wood and Sawyer Wood, till he found a refuge in Geraldine—in all 58 minutes, of which only the first eighteen could be called fast: by some the run was made longer. Mr. Archbold got a nasty fall at a water jump, and a visitor had rather a severe shaking too. The second fox, found at Nine-tree Hill, got to ground in Narraghmore Wood, and by this time it was too late to visit Ballintaggart, or Spratstown, or Matt's Gorse, as originally, I believe, proposed.

Rain fell on Friday night, and mitigated something of the extreme acerbity of the weather, but by Saturday morning everything was once more dry, crisp, and parched of aspect and feel. The ground crackled under your feet, as if the bed beneath was unusually hard, whilst there was a sort of crepuscular light all round, which

might bode anything, but which hunting men intuitively felt to mean a snowfall. The Kildare hounds were due at Courtown Gate, and judging by the processions of scarlet pilgrims who journeyed thither from Sallins, Naas, and the Kildare 'upper country,' the assemblage was bound to be a goodly one, and to show that the fine sport and straight runs which the coverts on this side of the Great Southern and Western line have not failed to furnish this season have been fully appreciated by the hunting world of Ireland. To one hacking from Naas, and the parts beyond that ancient and regal capital, there was an ominous ring from the smooth crown of the road, and the slush which generally pervades the sides was completely evaporated or absorbed. The fabled Cockney whom tradition depicted as riding down to Maidenhead thickets or some other tryst of Her Majesty's hounds, seeing the enlargement, and then hiring a yokel to bespatter front, back, and head gear with liberal road mud as a sign of his prowess, would have been at his wit's end to-day; for, if a bushel of mud had been worth a king's ransom, it was not to be had within hail of the main road, which presented little of interest or animation beyond the scarlet flashing of the riding array. The heavy pall which shrouded all but the nearer fields from view dulled everything, while the Liffey, which accompanies one for a portion of the journey, might be observed *minores volvere vortices*, owing to the somewhat unusual and prolonged spell of dry weather which we have enjoyed of late. It *was* a large meet even for Courtown, and the Sallins Road was not a bad indicator. I suppose the Ward Union hounds—whose popularity is increasing, certainly not flagging—had some tempting fixture in the Dublin country, or were going to hunt a popular long-running stag, for few of their men appeared in the crowd. Meath, on the contrary, showed in immense force, and among the blue collars (though somehow they seem to be eschewing their uniform save by candle-light) were Mr. Fowler, Mr. A. Macniel, Capt. C. Ponsonby, Lord Langford, Col. Lyster, Mr.

Vincent Brooks, Day & Son, Lith.

PLEASANT DAY IN A BROOK BOOTS FULL OF WATER AND A SNOW STORM."

Winter, Lady Bective (who was riding a very sharp-looking, brown horse, that knew all about fencing, as a lady's horse should), Capt. Tuthill, Messrs. Chapman, Brown, Bayley, Dunne, Murphy, and a number of others, whose names I cannot at this moment recall, though I should vastly like to be owner of a few of their horses.

The Queen's county was well championed by Mr. Adare, riding a lengthy bay horse, which Leicestershire knows well; while Kildare was of course the *pièce de résistance*, and included not a few who had come from the mountain ranges, such as Sir J. Higginson, Capt. Macaulay, and Mr. Fortescue Tynte, who has been an absentee for some time. The Queen's Bays, too, mustered strong—with them Capt. Lee. Among those whose reappearance in the hunting field was a subject of congratulation among his many friends, and of all who had witnessed his straight and plucky riding between the flags for many recurring seasons, was Mr. J. D. Whyte, who has been an absentee from the covert side, as well as from the steeplechase course, ever since his very serious fall at Baldoyle last year. With him was another gentleman jockey, Mr. Exshaw, who has steered many a winner to victory; but time fails us to take due stock and note of half the good-looking horses that pass momentarily before us. I will only add that I know no arena in Ireland where so many good-looking horses are habitually collected as here, including a large number of *débutants*, who avail themselves of the opportunity of completing their hunting education, for the country is far too large for the schooling of an ordinary steeplechaser, though I did see one out to-day, ridden by a lad.

The stereotyped programme of this meet was not departed from, and Courtown was explored, but no fox of average sagacity would await what the resonant hoofs of many scores of horses had warned him for the last half-hour to prepare for. (By the way I may remark that the temperature had risen again, and that mud was beginning to reappear.) Courtown was blank, so on we

trotted to Ballycaghan Gorse, and the thin particles of hail and snow, which had been drifting on us at intervals for the last hour, began to multiply exceedingly, and to threaten a snow storm. However, there is a very large grass field on this side of the gorse, and, though you are bounded on one side, you can easily give a chilly horse, or one who sets up his back in an ominous fashion, a mile or two of a gallop, if so inclined. No fox at Ballycaghan! So it seems after twenty minutes or quarter of an hour; but at last the music, very piano at first, swells to a full-voiced choir—in ten minutes more caps are in the air; and now, in these wide pastures, spurt along as fast as you are able, happy if you can keep within a couple of hundred yards of the hounds. Cappagh Gorse, as usual, seems our fox's stage, and all heads are turned thither. The initial fence is a plain ditch, such as you see hundreds of in this country, not very wide, not very deep; but, whether the banks are rather greasy, or whether horses put their forelegs too far down them and so overbalance themselves, this same ditch, which has two favourite spots in its extent, overthrows many a good and well-mounted pursuer. Capt. Warburton remembers it probably; Major Whyte Melville and Lord Spencer have not forgotten it, I'll be bound. To-day there was a rush for one of these happy spots; a black-coated sportsman from Dublin is the best sprinter, but a flash of black boots surmounting the breeches of whiteness, instead of supporting them, reveals that to-day was not to be free from falls. *Sic itur ad* Cappagh; but ere a mile had been run there is a pause, and nothing, not even a colley dog or blundering bullock, that might have scared a fox, appears in sight; a tempting sort of bridge lures the the fox on; he emerges on the far side to fight his way back to the gorse he came from, but, I fancy, the apparition of some of the tailmen scared him. A dive into a thick hedge of quickset is followed by a worry-worry, and *that* run is spoilt. Cappagh Gorse is aimed at next. We canter through a succession of green fields and cross one lane—in jumping into the latter Mr. Percy

La Touche's grey mare hits a stump, falls on her side, and both the owner's feet get caught momentarily; a gruesome sight had she stirred, but all was right again in a minute or two (both going in their usual style where fencing was biggest)—and we are at Cappagh Gorse, where there is plenty of holding, though the area is small. Not long in suspense here, and a regular stampede lead us on to Ballinakill, where the line turns a bit leftways; and those who jumped a wide bank have the satisfaction of finding themselves nearest to a burrow where our fox has escaped pursuit and the snowstorm, for it is falling fast. Once more to Cappagh, again past Ballinakill, round an airy tower—no inconsiderable landmark—and so on in a semicircle, at slow pace, towards Newtown Bog, and back to Cappagh Gorse. Snow was falling, horses balling (excuse the unconscious rhyme), and home suggested itself as the best place for the minority, for the majority had decided that point long ago. Like the mourners at Corunna, "we bitterly thought of the morrow." No, the morrow but one—Monday.

A good run in the Queen's County on Thursday last, from Moyadd Gorse *viâ* Lennons, Cullenagh, Sling, through Cremorgan, into Coolnabacca, and a kill on the ridge of the latter covert (1 hour 45 minutes), was much talked about; and so was a very good hunting run in Meath yesterday, which began in a hedgerow near Reesk Gorse (two stick coverts, Killrue and Kilmoon, had been first tried). The pace was said not to have been extraordinary at first, or scent favouring, but gradually the hounds worked up to their fox, sending him through Lagore, Dunshaughlin, by Batterstown, Drumree, Culmullen, and Beltrasna being left on the same hand (left), and so on to Galtrim, where his long journey was finished by death. This was a very fine pursuit, covering a great deal of country, and the last stage is described as extremely enjoyable. In Wexford scent has been low and catchy, and, beyond some good hound triumphs, there is nothing very note-

worthy from that quarter; while, I hear, Limerick may be placed in the same category.

In these days of spurting ten minutes, prolonged sometimes to twenty and twenty-five minutes, when the race is often not so much 'twixt pack and fox as between the leading horsemen and the leading hounds, it is refreshing to hear of another old-fashioned hunt with a pack that on occasions can show plenty of drive and dash—I mean the Carlow and Island hounds. The date was the 5th inst., the find at Shersheen on the Gorey side of Wexford, known locally as their Limerick country. Never an instant did he dally in the woods where he was found, did this wild, stout fox, but set his mask straight mountainwards; then, when he had reached the higher levels, he inclined towards the nor'-east, leaving Croan on the left, and traversing a beautiful line of high pasture land, free from furze and rocks, known as "The White Leaps," his course seemed naturally to lead him to the woodlands of Shelton Abbey, Lord Wicklow's park, and those of Glenart, Lord Carysfort's; but he ran parallel to both, crossed the river and *Shillelagh* Railway near Fort Falkner, still running in a northerly direction, and his point now seemed Whaley Abbey; but his strength was failing, so he turned a little eastwards, and was rolled over near *Avoca*, after a chase of a little over two hours, and nearly straight throughout, during which time hounds were only cast once, and the pace was so well sustained and continuous that horses just managed to stay with the pack. Moore has "sung" this lovely gem-like country, so I will not "say" it. The curious or unread in Irish lyrics will do well to turn to his pages, looking out "Avoca" or "The Meeting of the Waters" in the index. Mr. Watson had a ride of twenty-eight miles back to his kennels, but his hounds all answered the roll call.

I find I have omitted several interesting hunting episodes: for instance, I only alluded to the good Bengerstown run in Meath on the 27th. Its outline is as follows: a quick find and a ring

viâ Parsonstown, then a turn towards Adare, through it, and the death struggle between it and a wild gorse known as Summerhill. One hour ten minutes' time; line beautiful, pace good. Mr. Pepys (60th Rifles), who was thrown against a wall, is, I hear, mending fast.

On the 31st, finding in Dunmore, they had a fast scurry into Black Castle, marking to ground by the river. In this run the Hon. Harry Bourke got a very severe fall, but no bones were broken as reported.

A second run from the hill of Belsan was ended by darkness near Copilton.

I omitted also a sharp eighteen minutes with the Louth hounds from Knockback, a rare twenty-eight minutes with the same pack from Johnstown on the 28th ult., and one hour and five minutes same day, same pack, from "the Carnes," by Hilltown and Cooksgrove, scent best so far in this season. The reign of frost and snow has succeeded the recent genial warmth. Hunting is suspended, and apparently shelved *passim*. In Meath, dancing and dining festivals and ceremonials have been the order of the week, the latter in honour of Lord Headfort's nuptials.

January 22nd, 1876.

"La nuit porte conseil," say our epigrammatic neighbours and allies *d'outre manche;* we may paraphrase it by remarking that frost and snow bring an unpleasant burden of reflection to many a foxhunter: it may be on "private wrongs," as Blackstone, I think, calls them, or public wrongs. The former will of course be all the more aggravating in their visitation if they spring up at that festive period when no amount of plum-pudding or mince-pie can avert the haunting shadows of portentous bills, and when, in

sporting parlance, a good eleven months' run at killing pace is arrested by a sudden and long check. Then an Ecclesiastes tinge is imparted to thought, and the vanity of hunters, of corn bills, of grooms' books, of breeches *à la* Anderson and pinks *à la* Poole, takes forcible possession of the mind. I speak not now of those temporary glooms which perhaps attend the hunting brain less than any other. Horace, the friend and foe of our adolescence, advises "Æquam memento rebus in arduis servare mentem," which an indiscreet youth, unmindful of his diphthongs (probably reminded by a *thong*), once translated in lecture, "Be sure you keep *a mare* when the times are hard"—both admirable counsels, if at times rather puzzling to follow. I allude now more especially to the *public wrongs* of foxhunters, and foremost among them I would place the reckless and often selfish maiming and decimation of foxes by wholesale trapping, or in some cases by the use of poison. In my notes I have occasionally pointed the moral of my diatribes by giving illustrations and hitting the blot locally. At this moment I do not propose to stigmatise any county or parish or townland in Ireland, merely remarking that in districts I wot of foxes are improved off the face of the soil at a very alarming rate; and even supposing—a favourable construction—that the lords of the soil are not only no consenting parties to these acts or laches, but regret them sincerely and wish to repair the evil and its consequences, it is not in their power, or within the compass of ever so long a purse, to replace the old order of things, or avoid what the Geneva arbitration taught us to call consequential damages to the foxhunting commonwealth. A brace or two of old foxes, who have roamed since their cubbing time, five summers past, over the vicinity for ten miles round, are ill-replaced by importations from goodness knows where—worse even, perhaps, by half-tame spiritless cubs "turned down" in summer, daintily fed by the keeper, and untaught the longer excursions which a good vixen will instil into her offspring. Having kindred thoughts running in my head, I ventured, in my

last letter of the season of 1875, to break forth with a rhyming aspiration. The rhymes were uncouth, but I think their sentiment will find a ready echo in many a hunting heart in this Ireland of ours; so may I beg them a corner. We suppose the bells to be ringing in the New Year, *more* Tennyson, and their burden to be,

> Ring *traps* and *wire* and *poison* out,
> Ring foxes in straight-neck'd and stout,
> And save us from the *turn'd down* rout.

I regretted much that want of space prevented my giving any chronicle of some good sport in Galway in the last bundle of notes I sent you. Let me now hasten to repair my omission, premising that scent has not been very favourable in this western shire so far, while gales and tempests have also interfered with hunting not a little. Since the break-up of the first frost and snow, things have, however, improved considerably. Thus, on the 30th ult., Mr. Burton Persse had a capital hour and a quarter from Kilcornan to ground, the hounds going a great pace all through and over a very stiff line of country. On the 3rd inst. this pack met at Dunsandle, where the largest head of game in Ireland coexists with many foxes. A brace were found at once, and ten couple of hounds, with the master and a few more, went off with one over a beautiful line, when, after about twenty minutes, an unguarded sewer stopped a very promising run. In Carnakelly, another wood of Lord Dunsandle's, there was a second very quick find, and some hard riding to get up to the pack as they sent their fox along by Esker and Tallaghan into Moyode, where he visited the earths, but, finding them closed, tried another sanctuary. From scent to view was now the order of things, and the end was in a large grass pasture, after twenty-seven minutes of pace which may well be described as "best."

On the 5th they met at Cregg Castle, but drew it blank, as well

as Bawnmore, Kiltrogue, Cregmere, etc., which augurs something very wrong on this side of the country. Belleville, as usual, sent out a rare good fox, as the day was beginning to wane, and for forty minutes the hounds hunted him without check, hesitation, or handling, running into him at or about 4.30; the pace capital, the country grass, and light riding. I was also forced to omit some sport in Meath, merely alluding to it. On the 4th Meath danced at Kells; on the 5th she met late at Headfort, and had some park hunting, and two short spins afterwards from Farrenalcock and Rathmano. In the evening Lord Headfort was the guest of the hunt, who attended to the number of some sixty. The next day they killed a fox close to Clifton Lodge, took another from Tullahanogue to the Hill of Ward to ground, when a fresh one started up, and ran a most enjoyable ring by Rathmore, Moyagher, Gillstown, etc. On the 7th they were at Kilmoon. I alluded to this great run in my last, but very cursorily. The fox got a good start, through Lagore, Dunshaughlin, by the Poor House, by Parsonstown and Batterstown station, thence almost along the line to Drumree station, through Mr. Leonard's farm to the left of Culmullen and Beltrasna, through Arodstown, and was rolled over in the middle of a field at the back of Galtrim church, after upwards of two hours' pursuit on a grand line which is made by the geographers not less than eighteen miles, though, in the interest of truth and history—historical truth, I may as well call it at once—some local landholders estimated it at not more than fifteen. Strange it is that two Reesk foxes should in two years have given such extraordinary good runs. The former (in the glories of which Lord Spencer shared largely) was far longer than the present; but from the current gossip (for it was not my luck to be in either, though I had partially made arrangements for being at Kilmoon), I think the latter had better and faster bits interspersed through it. Among them was a very cheery fifteen minutes, which only the minority who stuck to the hounds really saw well, and these probably sealed the fox's fate. It was, I

believe, somewhat on this wise: Near Woodtown scent was low, and hounds were only picking out the line cautiously and patiently. I hear the county Louth men voted the chase over, and having some distance to ride home, returned *en masse.* Culmullen House was near, and many having proved and approved the contents of cellar, larder, and buttery there, this caused another migration. In the meantime Mr. Trotter viewed the fox in front. He did not—nor, for the matter of that, did M'Bride or Mr. Waller—interfere with the hounds in the slightest degree, for they were working on to him, and decreasing their distance momentarily; and the result was a charming gallop over wide grass fields, almost bordering on Beltrasna Gorse. Something less than a score saw the last scene of all, among whom was the Hon. Harry Bourke, who rode the run with his arm in a sling, and secured the head of this gallant fox, which a friend of mine, whom I met in the hunting field a day or two afterwards, assured me was about the third finest and biggest mask he had ever viewed—and his experience on both sides of the Channel is very great, nor are many more continuously near foxes in pursuit or when succumbing —(it formed a sideboard trophy at Hayes that evening). As this hard-riding gentleman is not a member of the Meath hunt, he may possibly have leant a little bit to the foxhood of his own county. Wire is not a general plague in Meath; but to-day I hear it appeared on one farm in most dangerous, nay almost deadly guise, placed at the far side of a big bank, which most men and most horses would charge at good pace, in the belief that as was the taking off so would be the landing. Fortunately, hounds were not running fast at the time, and a line of gates was handy, or possibly I might have had some accidents like Lord Leigh's to record, if no worse.

The newly tried experiment of dividing Meath into districts for earth-stopping purposes seems to have worked well to-day, for it may be assumed the hunted fox tried several on this long journey, notably one on Mr. Allen's farm.

An amusing controversy is just now going on in one of the Dublin prints. A sportsman who signs himself "Staghunter" says that, as now conducted, staghunting is mere coursing, the riding steeplechasing; and he proposes that the hounds should be reduced in size so that pursuers may hear them "bark" (*sic*). He has been ably answered by "A Meath Farmer" on behalf of the Ward Union Hunt, and I have not seen his rejoinder.

Sport and scent have favoured Westmeath of late—witness the following excerpts from their annals of the chase: On the 4th they met at Drumcree, the residence of Gen. Leicester Curzon Smyth, and exchanged greetings with many neighbouring Meath men, who wanted a gallop before their hunt ball at Kells that evening. From a wild bit of gorse close by they had a very fast bit of eighteen minutes, without a check till the final one at Clonyn, where a sewer was unfortunately left ungrated. From Moortown, a covert of Lord Greville's, a second fox issued directly, who ran towards Archerstown first, and then turned into Clonyn, and got to ground as was supposed. A third broke from the Laurels of South Hill, ran for Rosmead, but turned at the house very sharply for Clonyn, thereby slipping nearly the whole field, who rode straight on for the covert, through Clonyn and back; again through South Hill the hounds drove him, with most favouring scent, thence over the open country, through Clonaskill and Avonstown, till he came to the bounding fence between the two counties, Eastern and Western Meath. From this he turned and ran right into Ballinlough, some three miles distant, where a fresh fox jumped up, pointing for Killure, and, as the hour was five, the hounds were stopped. The master, Mr. Reynell, went to inspect the earths at Ballinlough, and was satisfied that this gallant fox, who had done his nine miles (Irish) in good time (1 hour 20 minutes), was safely housed. Among the visitors, Capt. Kearney saw the hounds about the best; while the master, Mr. Purdon, the hunt servants, and one lady saw the finish well.

On the 5th they were in a very different sort of country, Ballinacor, near Moate, being the meeting point. Its beautiful gorse seemed full of foxes, and one was hunted over a fine line for twenty minutes fast till he got into a rabbit hole. The casualties were, I hear, numerous, but harmless. From Glencara and Huntstown they dragged after foxes who had gone on too long, but in Crieve—which was a great favourite of Mr. Longworth, the *ci-devant* master of all this country—a good bold fox turned up, who went away with the pack at his brush. He crossed the river of the same name, where a lady pursuer was extricated (not without difficulty) by the master, while others got in and out as best they could. A ring of thirty minutes without a check brought the fox back to his starting point, with the hounds very near, when a fresh fox jumped up before them and took the hounds along for an hour till they reached Killure covert. This last run was viewed and enjoyed by nearly an entire field (including the ladies out), and the fact is the highest commendation of the Moate horses (some of them probably may be seen annually at the Streamstown horse show, and their style of jumping criticised).

The United Hunt (Cork) met in storm and rain at Water Grass Hill, a village which Lord Fermoy much affected for his fixtures. After some pleasant hunting from Fellsfort to Kilguard the hounds were thrown into Dundillerick, which was blank, but Buckley's Glen was tenanted by a rare good specimen, who raced away for twenty-five minutes till the hounds turned him up in the open, having, I hear, never taxed horses so severely this season. Mr. Mountiford Longfield, who was bound to be on a well-bred one at any rate, was about the nearest to them throughout. On Wednesday, the 5th, they were at Glangonera. Their old master, Lord Shannon, visited them, and, though there was nothing so brilliant as on the previous occasion, there was a fine show of foxes and lots of hunting.

The chronicle of hunting in Ireland this week is almost a

tabula rasa, a record of negatives. The weather has been like George Villiers, as depicted by the satirist—everything by turns and nothing long; and, indeed, we may almost paraphrase the other well-known couplets of the poem in alluding to our January fluctuations of atmosphere—

> For, in the course of one revolving moon,
> We've had a touch of frost, snow, and monsoon.

In Kildare there was a general *consensus* that hunting at Old Kilcullen was impossible on Monday last, and so no one that I heard of went to the tryst. On Tuesday the hounds were due at Blessington, which is immediately under the shadows and influence of snow-clad hills; but one pursuer, I am told, braved all considerations of broken bones, and appeared in the main street of that pleasant little town, leading his hunter, which he found it dangerous to ride, over roads which would have made capital extempore rinks. This cavalier *seul* reminds me of Sheridan's witticism when the bottom fell out of his sedan chair, but dignity required that he should appear to be duly borne to his terminus by the porters.

On Thursday this pack was due at Bolton Hill, one of the extreme points of Kildare territory, some twenty odd miles from Sallins in the Carlow direction. On Wednesday there was a very decided thaw, and a warm, bright sun aided the liquefaction considerably. On the *carpe diem* principle, numbers were induced to send on their hunters to such more or less contiguous points as Dunlavin, The Grange, Grange Con, Davidstown, Tynte Park, and Moon, and to accept the hospitable proposals of the owners of several pleasant houses in the vicinity, counting neighbourhood as anything under ten miles English. Those who hacked or drove the distance from the vale had a charming day for their journey, and the many recurring hills made all pause, voluntarily, or involuntarily, to admire the magnificent hunting prospect which this rich table-land spreads before the traveller; for miles and

miles you can see nothing but grass, and even still in many places luxuriantly abundant, in spite of grazing herds and the incursions of frost. It is perfectly free from peat-moss, or bog, and small brooks water and drain it alternately. In some places the fields have been well squared, and contain a very large acreage; in others they are of the old uneven stamp, and separated by veryirregular banks, mostly furze -grown, while some are broken away in spots, requiring a clever, temperate sort of horse to carry you safely over them. Once the parks of Harristown, Sallymount, and Giltown have been left behind, there is a total absence of woodland for many a mile; nor are there even many hedgerows to give a beaten fox temporary shelter or a chance of baffling his pursuers.

By half-past three o'clock, however, signs of frost reappeared with the sinking sun, and very soon the whole west was glorious with clouds of maize, amber, violet, and scarlet hues. The moon took up the frosty tale by-and-by, and those who "cut out" of the whist table, and wanted to speculate on their hunting chances, had an opportunity of seeing the unpleasing panorama of a cloudless frosty night, and feeling the gravel hard and consolidated as an asphalted bit of pavement. To go to the meet, or not to go, was a very vexed question in the morning. Of course, if plough had preponderated in our hunting grounds, riding to hounds would have been hopeless, while fencing must have been very risky; but the thick carpet of grass which I alluded to just now, and which really warded off most of the frost, tempted the majority into a belief that hounds would hunt. So there *was* a meet, but Will Freeman, who had some distance to come to it, thought it was too dangerous for hounds' feet; and, as nothing could be done without the principal actors, the meeting separated, the Carlow men going to their nearer homes, most of the Kildare men to very distant ones. There can be no doubt that the decision was a prudent one; for, even though the grass could be galloped over with impunity, there are those many cattle gaps in

all grazing countries, rough as plough and hard as iron, which would have told a grievous tale on fetlocks and back sinews.

By the way, I may here call attention to a new feature in the Kildare hunting lists, which, originally made out for seven days a fortnight, have been changed by the present public-spirited master into four days weekly—equivalent to making the subscribers a present of a by-day each fortnight.

On Saturday their meet was at Hazel Hatch Station, on the Great Southern and Western line, which, as most travellers have observed, is in the middle of a fine bit of vale, through which the Liffey meanders slowly and windingly. A comparative thaw —or rather a suspension of freezing—on the coast and round Dublin Bay, tempted a few men from the metropolis to wend their way thither, while red coats flashed through Dublin *en route* to the Ward Union fixture. The Kildare division gained nothing by their enterprise, as the hounds did not come to the meeting point. Of the Ward Union adventures I will speak presently; but let us first take a retrospective glance at their previous two days' history. On Saturday last they met at the Flat House, in a snowstorm, their stag being one of the Knowsley ones, and untried. As it often fortunes, scent and snow made a rare combination for speed, and some four or five alone lived through the fast part of a very quick gallop, whose stages were Rathbeggan, Ballyhack, Kilbride, Summerseat, and Clonsilla.

On Monday and Tuesday hunting was impossible. On Wednesday there was a partial thaw, and at Baltrasna Lord Derby, a stag of celebrity, was enlarged. His course led through Muckrosstown, The Wooton, to Hollywood Rath, thence to Abbottstown, Mr. Ion Trant Hamilton's fine park, till he took to soil in the canal which runs parallel to the Navan Railway. I do not know if the Dublin University common room is as celebrated for its old port as those of the Oxford colleges and halls; but if it be, a fellow of that institution had a good excuse for ordering more walnuts and more wine, for he could tell his brother dons more of

this fine pursuit than any one else, as he was nearest the hounds by a long interval during all the best of it.

On Saturday, the 15th, some of the Irish coast was visited by a sort of slow sullen thaw, and by noon Dublin was beginning to plume herself on one of her specialities—*dirt;* the other, which generally accompanies it, being *dearness*. Of the former, all could form a very good opinion, as it was *en évidence* in streets, lanes, and *trottoirs*, black and tenacious at first, but gradually melting into the slushy stage. (At the same time heavy-weights were amusing themselves on the pond at Punchestown!) I fancy some telegraph or sign had come from Ashbourne that the country was ridable, for Mr. Morrogh and his party went out at the usual time, apparently nothing doubting. The sequel was a run so brilliant, as I hear, and continuous in sustained pace, that the hounds had all, or nearly all, the fun to themselves after the first quarter of an hour or twenty minutes. I cannot give a concise version of the gallop, or even a perfectly correct one, as I only picked up as it were *disjecta membra* of it from a very well-mounted man, whose experience ranges over the best hunting grounds on either side the Channel, and who only saw bits of it. The stag was enlarged near Kilrue, and inclined at first for Ashbourne. After some hunting he pointed for the Balfestown river, and, whether water was not congenial to the majority out, or from whatever cause, soon after this, I hear, the ranks of pursuit were mere skeletons, and the pity was great; for the line traversed was by the Fairy House, and many thousands know to what a peerless country that forms a centre.

On Monday, the 17th, I suppose hunting re-asserted its supremacy in Ireland as no longer a "lost art," seeing that the mild thaw of Sunday seemed to have been universally felt; and, to leave no room for doubt or hesitation in the matter, tolerably heavy rain set in about nine o'clock in the morning. The Kildare hounds were due at Ballymore-Eustace, a thriving little village on the banks of the river Liffey, which has, like some

remarkable characters of either sex, principally Gallic, a history and a past, and withal a contented prosperous present, to which a thriving frieze factory contributes its share. Its name tells you that it was the great town of the Eustaces. I believe the latter family own neither lands, tenements, nor hereditaments about here now, though a marble effigy of one of their ancestors may be seen in the neighbouring Barrettstown Castle, by which the chase will lead us in hot haste presently.

The meet was a decidedly large one, considering that no town or railway supplemented the county people. "The pent-up pilgrims of the chase" were determined to throw away no more chances, and as for young Hibernia, it positively swarmed. Many years (*eheu fugaces !*) have passed away since we answered the "calling over" or "manum ferulæ subduximus," but somehow on a rough calculation we have a notion that the Christmas vacation must be waning, and that for many this will be nearly a last appearance. All, at any rate, seemed to know the practical application of one tag of schoolboy Latin, and *carpe diem* was never more unswervingly carried out. Stonebrook Gorse, which used to be a very favourite haunt of foxes, but seems now to have fallen out of fashion, was first tried, and without success. The woody banks of the Liffey were not vocal to-day, and there was nothing for it but to trot on to Elverstown, where a couple of hillsides and a *quasi* ravine between are clothed with many acres of thick, luxuriant gorse, presided over by Mr. Nolan, a covert keeper whose long experience is only equalled by his good fame. It generally proves full of foxes, often perplexingly so; but to-day acres on acres had been carefully drawn without eliciting a whimper, and the hounds themselves gave one the idea that they did not think there could be a fox in its whole extent. We were now in fogland, and the prospects of the day seemed very gloomy when a neighbouring labour bell rang out for one o'clock.

> Bad luck to the country! the clock had struck one—
> No foxes yet found! No hunting begun!

So may have thought a few of the tenants of very soppy, clammy leathers as they shivered on the hillside, for many had long rides before them ere they could reach warm baths and dry things. Ten minutes more changed the dreary immobility and patient forbearance into life, energy, and animation. What hound had the honour of the find I cannot say, but he did not keep the secret to himself, and soon a joyful burst of hound music filled the hillside. I think it must have been the same fox we hunted a few weeks ago through Punchestown Gorse, for his first impulse led him to the gaunt, wind-swept chapel on the hillside, which is the preliminary stage thither. Footpeople near a covert are somewhat a rarity nowadays in Kildare or in Meath; the few one occasionally encounters are, as a rule, good sportsmen, and neither "holloa" nor gesticulate. To-day—whether a festa or not, I cannot say—there was a small procession near the chapel, and the fox, misliking their aspect, turned from the vale below him, ran parallel to the road, and thus, with the help of a furry bank, got safely back to the gorse. Scent is evidently ablaze, and his stay in the huge gorse is rendered a very brief one, for he is presently seen racing over a grass field *en route* to Sir Erasmus Borrowes's fields at Barrettstown Castle; through these without a moment's delay to hounds, though a bank with wire on the landing side rather retarded men and horses; across the Ballymore Road, and so on down some deep pitches, but all fine old turf and good galloping. Greys seem the colour of the moment, and all of them horses of character. Mr. Gough has brought his well-known Tipperary grey that was so hard to catch in this country two seasons ago, and both seem as fresh and fit and full of go as ever. Sir James Higginson rides a good one of the same hue, so do Mr. Graydon and Mr. Percy La Touche. A nasty furzy double gives Mr. Gough's mare an opportunity of showing her quickness and cleverness. A dirty forehead band or two among the followers show that it wanted "doing." On through "The Seasons," Mr. Fitzgerald's residence, where the locked entrance-gate gives

us a nasty fence into a road; on through more green fields, and more galloping downhill, till we pass the churchyard of Ballymore Eustace—a very peopled one—and the schoolhouse, with mistress and scholars all agape at the unwonted interruption to their studies, and we then enter the park and plantations of Bishopsland to hear a whoo-whoop presently; "gone to ground in a rabbit burrow" in a wood above the Liffey. It was a sharp 27 minutes, and over a line (all grass) that I never heard of a fox selecting yet, as from Barrettstown Castle they almost invariably turn towards Russborough, Lord Milltown's residence. There was some grief, and I hear that a gallant colonel of a line regiment had the misfortune to kill his hunter. Men were naturally full of "ride" after the long spell of inaction, and I do not recollect seeing so much timber jumped in a short gallop for some time. No one went better than the son of Mr. W. Kennedy (ex-master of the pack), on a smart well-bred mare that he steered admirably. The concluding draw was Punchestown Gorse. A fox broke for Gowran Grange handsomely; but an ex-M.F.H. cut him off, and sent him back to the gorse; when he tried the opposite side, a hard-riding farmer was equally kind. The third try, in the direction of Silliott Bog, was more fortunate; he did not, however, go so far on this line, but, swinging to the right, ran over some bottom land, skirted the fine large grass pastures of Mullacash Hill, and soon, in some tillage and fallow, brought the hounds to their noses. I believe he was dragged after to Killashee; but once the Curragh Road was passed it seemed somewhat of a "vain thing." The going to-day was admirable; some talk there was of bone left, but I think, if our course to-day had been over plough, we should have found it all too soft and soppy for anything like good pace.

I spoke of last Wednesday as a brief interval of delusive and deluding thaw in Kildare. Other counties were more fortunate, and to Mr. Burton Persse and his pack it yielded one of the finest runs which this season has yet written in its archives. The

locus quo was at Carra Gorse, in what is locally known as the Loughrea country; two foxes issuing forth, and now running parallel, now crossing each other, in a way most puzzling to hounds. In Ballydonellan, where they only dwelt an instant, they left one of the brace; and, tackling to the other with a will, sent him along over one of the best lines which Galway presents —large grass pastures, divided alternately by banks and walls. For an hour and twenty minutes they ran and they raced till they killed their fox in the open. The field was "all over the country," attesting thus the severity of the pace, which no check or pause interrupted; and Mr. Burton Persse will have to transfer his saddle and horn to another mount, for the hunter that carried him so brilliantly to-day will never do so more.

In Meath, as everywhere else, frost vetoed all hunting last week, till Wednesday's partial thaw made a resumption of the campaign possible, though not too easy, on Thursday, when the hounds met at Allenstown, the master's residence. The Hill of Faughan, the first covert drawn, sent out a leash of foxes, one of which was rattled at good pace through Downstown towards Philpotstown, over a closely enclosed country; through Muckinstown and Ardbraccan, he rang back to the woods of Allenstown; once more over Faughan Hill, the line leads through Ballybeg and Kilmainham, where many a brook took its toll from the field, and slowly on to Cortown. Here a fresh fox jumped up, and either fox led the hounds on to Irishtown (one of the Balrath coverts), and thence towards Fordstown, from which point a turn to the right brought them near Drewstown Bog, through the large fields of Balrath, with Belgerth and Kilskier to the right, and from this point to Milltown, Mr. Kearney's residence, the pace improved much. A long check here occurred, and, darkness supervening, the hounds were drawn off, after a fine hunting run of some ten miles. Messrs. Pratt, Trotter, Dunville, and one or two more, alone saw the finish with Macbride and his men.

January 29th, 1876.

An old topographical dictionary informs me that the village of Sallins contains less than five hundred inhabitants. I should hope it did by several fifties, as, if houses be any criterion for the eye to judge by, there is a manifest want of that cubic space which, with the necessary proportion of ozone and oxygen, philosophers assure us to be one of the rights of man. On the 18th inst., however, at eleven of the clock, Sallins had expanded to abnormal proportions, and the number of notables, with their retainers—wives, sisters, and peradventure sweethearts—almost rivalled the wonted census of the little thoroughfare; for at this hour, or five minutes later, an enormous crowd on wheels and on horseback were busy exchanging greetings with their friends and allies, surveying the hounds or speculating on the fortunes of the day. The meet is a very popular one of the Kildare hounds, as the facilities presented by the Great Southern and Western line are sure to draw pursuers from Dublin, Carlow, the King's and Queen's Counties, Kilkenny, and I believe even from Galway; though for the latter assertion, while I maintain the possibility, I must acknowledge the rareness of the precedents. Meath is seldom represented on the further or hilly side of the metals which bisect the Kildare territory, and Sallins is perhaps the *ultima Thule* of the men of that flat shire, who do not take kindly to the rough-and-tumble sort of strambling fencing which the upper Kildare country occasionally involves in a run. To-day there were several Meath men out, and they are generally a right-well mounted lot. Dublin was strongly represented in its varied phases of the life civil, military, and professional. Lieut.-Col. Forster, who was riding a very beautiful Kildare horse, Greek Fire (he ran here once and won easily), must be my champion for the first class, as the appointment which he has so ably filled for many years, that of Master of the Horse to the Viceroy, is, I think, a civil office. Capt. the Hon. E.

Boscawen, who is bound by lineage and tradition to be an authority on all matters appertaining to hounds and horses, will be my representative for the second; while Mr. Franks will well and truly do duty for the third. "The army" was as strongly mustered in nearly all its arms and branches as if the rendezvous had been Dunchurch or Bilton Grange, and the Grand Military coming off next day. The Queen's Bays sent a very smart coach-load, driven by Mr. Jones, of that regiment (is it "chic" to hog the manes of wheelers and leaders?), while the Artillery and Line, Guards, Life Guards, Hussars, Lancers, and Horse Artillery, were in force. Gen. Seymour, who commands at the Curragh, and who has been an absentee for some weeks "on urgent private affairs," was warmly congratulated on his reappearance in hunting grounds where he has long since been recognised as an *habitué*. Mr. Gough and Major Friend had come from the high banks of Tipperary with a remarkably good-looking pair of hunters; Mr. Horace Rochfort and Mr. Stewart Duckett represented Carlow and the adjoining counties; while among the riding ladies were Mrs. Langrishe, Lady E. Bourke, Mrs. Benson, Miss Beauman, Miss O'Hanlon, Miss O'Kelly, and Miss Kilbee. Among the "reappearances" was that of Col. O'Hanlon in pink—a colour which he has, I think, eschewed since his bad accident. Judging from the coverts and other indications, I should imagine that Sallins has been a meet of the Kildare hounds ever since they were formed into a county pack; but I should like to ask one of the patriarchs of the hunt something about the contrast 'twixt "now and then." He might shake his head and say there was more sport then, if there were fewer to realise its enjoyments. As a *coup d'œil* and spectacle there could be little room for contrast; the whole thing was local in comparison to its present cosmopolitan character. No doubt an odd magnate occasionally posted down from Dublin and other long distances; but of the *dii minorum gentium*, if any of them wanted to come from, say the King's or Queen's County, or from the Shannon Vale, their best

conveyance was the canal flyboat, which flew by night and flew by day, but not much faster than seven miles per hour!

Mr. Mansfield allowed the assembly some ten or fifteen minutes to gossip, make arrangements, and generally to shake into their places; then he set the cavalcade in motion by issuing the *mot d'ordre* for Osberstown Gorse (Mr. Nolan's property), where the preservation is so perfect that, though not more than half or three-quarters of a mile from Naas—with its garrison and *gamins*, its loafers and loungers—a blank draw is all but unknown. It lies sequestered among wide-spreading pastures, where the strength of the fences, by no means despicable, has been, I regret to say, very generally fortified by strands of wire drawn through the quicks, and not always discernible to the galloping pursuer.

Osberstown Gorse is a very large one, taking a deal of drawing, and twenty minutes or more were spent before the fox that the hounds had settled on could be forced into the open. His line was almost precisely identical with that of the last pursued from the same stronghold, across the canal, and then by the ruins of Jigginstown. For a few fields hounds positively raced; then came a lane way, some heading apparitions, a sharp turn-back, and some slow hunting under the old castellated keep of Rathascar, where he got to ground, not five fields from where he had earthed himself on the former occasion.

To dig out foxes, or to *draw them*, is no Kildare practice. The field is far too impatient and full of ride to tolerate it; and public opinion, from the farm-labourer to the lord of many thousands of acres, is dead against it. In my experience I cannot recall more than two or three instances of this custom—certainly more honoured here in the breach than in the observance; and only one of these vulpecidal excavations was done in Kildare—indeed, in that case the attempt proved abortive. In all these things the M.F.H. must be credited with knowing more than his critics; and I heard, *inter alia*, that our fox of to-day had been injured more or less, and that it was perhaps the most merciful thing to

destroy him. Be that as it may be, the order went forth; a nine-months fox terrier (of the Fitzwilliam strain) was sent for to the kennels, and, after half an hour or so, during which the fox and terrier were hard at it, the latter came out triumphant, though much lacerated, drawing out a fine dog fox, ever so much heavier than himself I should imagine. He was not given much law, and was run into directly.

A very long trot across a canal and the river Liffey had its terminus at a piece of wild unenclosed gorse not far from Landens town, which I do not recollect having been drawn before to-day. The visit was a most decided success, as the bitches forced a fox out of it directly, sending him along the Liffey banks till he came to the well-known ford. "Remnant" was here enjoying a tremendous lead, and the scent was all hounds could wish for. Past the ford, through a gorse, and so on to the shelter of Castle Keely covert, was the fox's course. The field had to retrace their steps, gallop up or down a green lane, cross a railway bridge, and get, by short cut or long cut, gate or bank, to Castle Keely. (It is a fox's castle, not a human's.) An officer of the Queen's Bays shows the way over a thorny bank, and cuts off a considerable angle thereby. All arrive sooner or later, and the hounds are ravening for their prey in the gorse and spinney. He tries to emerge once or twice but is headed back hopelessly; and it looks as if he must be killed inside. At last, however, he breaks safely, runs a ploughed field—which, judging by its holding properties, must have been admirably tilled—and thence across a lane or two and some small fields, till presently we emerge into good galloping grass pastures, and the pace is something faster than most horses out can live comfortably, unless they have started on very even terms with the pack. Over a wide bank, where you could hear your horse's hoofs rattle against the wire which lay "couchant" on the top (I suppose it was "rampant" till the posts rotted away and fell), on to another lane, then by some gravelly hills till a branch of the Grand Canal is reached, and we find that our hard-

pressed fox plunged in, essayed to scramble out at a lock near Landenstown (Paudeen is the local title), and got drowned. One of the drags of the lock-keeper was seized upon by Major the Hon. E. Lawless, and our quarry was thus gaffed and brought on to the bank (salmon fashion), where he was soon devoured after the due formalities had been gone through. In this scurry, which I should think was under two miles, I saw Lady Eva Bourke's cob holding its own with many larger horses. It is a wonderful animal of its inches, for some two seasons ago I saw it carrying the Hon. Maurice Bourke (who could not have ridden very much under 13st., I should think) brilliantly in a good run from Tinoran Hill into the county Carlow. Miss Kilbee, on her chestnut mare, was also going as near the hounds as most out.

I had to return home from a lost fore shoe (a predicament in which I should hardly think I was singular). I learnt that the third draw, Bellavilla, was a success, so far as foxes went, but that a very short gallop was the sole result. So ended one of the fairest days we have seen, so far, this season. The air was balmy and spring-like, there was no wind, and scent lay well. I expect to hear that hounds have been triumphant throughout Ireland to-day.

It may sound paradoxical, but all who have had any amount of real hunting experience will know that a large tottle of "masks and faces" is no indication of a good season or brilliant sport, and so it has fortuned with the Curraghmore hounds since they commenced the campaign in November last. The Marquis of Waterford, up to the end of last week, may credit his pack with the largest number of slain foxes which any single pack in Ireland can boast of—29½ brace; but, with the exception of a few good runs, his season has not been marked by its usual brilliancy, so far. An extremely good bye-day on Monday last may, however, mark the commencement of a new and different era. The first covert drawn was Carrick-a-Tubbrick, and the find was instantaneous. The hounds forced their fox to Killeen, a Kilkenny

covert, rattled him through it without delay, sending him out towards Kiltorcan, when he inclined to the right, skirted Coolmeare, and then bore up for Knockbrack, which he did not reach; for, swinging to the right again, he gained a sewer under the road leading to Mullinavat, having run and raced for fifty-seven minutes, of which the first part was about top speed, the latter fast and sustained. Duke, the huntsman, riding in his well-known brilliant style, was, I believe, decidedly nearest to the flying pack; those next were the Marquis of Waterford, Lord Marcus Beresford, Capt. Amcotts, Mr. Colthurst, and the first whip.

I have been able to pick up something more connected and authentic than the *disjecta membra* I sent you last week of a magnificent stag hunt which the Ward Union Hunt enjoyed last Saturday, and in which, I believe, a few frozen-out Kildare men participated. I sent you the short scraps of it which one of the more fortunate few, who saw the beginning and part of the middle of it, told me at the covert side. As it was an exceptionally good chase in pace, distance, and country, and run under somewhat exceptional circumstances, let me give you a very brief sketch of its course. The stag who was the hero of the day was "Moynalvey"—let us give him his name and title by all means. He was enlarged near the Redrath Road, headed for Kilrue, then pointed towards Balfestown, slipped nearly all the field in Balfestown plantation, turned for Ballymacoll, thence to Caulstown, where the hounds viewed him, on to Harbourstown, through Mr. Maher's farm, to the steeplechase course at Ballyhack, thence past Ratoath, by Lagore and Cabin Hill, till he was taken at Reesk covert, from which the Meath hounds had such a grand hunting run in the earlier part of the month.

This run measures on the map eleven miles; the country traversed was uninterrupted grass, and the pace was too severe for horses to live through, much less attempt a stern chase. I believe if I name Col. Forster and Messrs Dodd and O'Reilly as the most successful in pursuit, I shall have nearly exhausted the list.

I alluded to a good day which the Louth hounds had on Wednesday last—the day when frost was suspended for a few hours and a warm sun made a partial thaw. Finding at Ballygarth, they ran their fox by Mosney, Greenhills, and Elm Grove up to Stacmullen village, a fast twenty-five minutes; here he was headed, and turned round the outskirts of Gormanstown, across the railway, on to the Strand, and thence to ground in a sandbank —1 hour 10 minutes in all.

Hilltown produced lots of foxes, who divided the pack, but at last they settled on to one, and ran him by Beaumont to ground in a quarry hole. They found again at "the Carnes," and ran a fox fast into Hilltown, where once more several foxes were on foot simultaneously. Night and a sharp frost now came on, and all had some difficulty in getting home.

I do not know whether there was an alliance in the days of old 'twixt Diana and Terpsichore, or whether the friendship was mainly reserved for modern times, when their altars are no longer crowned, and the only sacrifice these divinities now receive is that of a large proportion of our *jeunesse dorée*, who endure much patiently in mind and body, in learning all about them theoretically in their own classic tongue, before they can hope to cultivate them more practically. At any rate, there was a great festa in their honour at Moore Abbey on the night of the 19th instant, when Lord and Lady Drogheda collected together, in the fine wainscoted hall which had served Adam Loftus (*on dit*) for his High Court of Chancery some two hundred and odd years ago, much of the beauty and much of the hunting chivalry of Ireland, with a sprinkling of both from Saxondom. Well represented were the blue facings of Eastern Meath, and the sombre tints of the western shire of the same name, the white and scarlet of Kildare, and the flying fox of the Ormond and King's County hunt, which, if I mistake not, is also the cognizance of the Berkeley hunt (Lord Fitzhardinge's), *vice* the old yellow plush. Masters in *esse*, and masters *in posse* and *futuro*, jostled against

each other in the galop and waltz, as they have over and over again when striving to emerge from the crowd and shake off the cocktails! Of course, there was a fall or two; but rinking beauty, riding beauty, and dancing beauty are and were content to run these hazards, particularly when the old oak floor was polished to perfection, and Mr. Liddell, enthroned like Timotheus, made the pace a cracker. A county gathering it was, also insular, if not cosmopolitan, and Columbia's *fair* daughters and *dark* daughters were as puissant in enchantments and glamour as the Pocahontas of hunting fame, of whom our grandmothers used to tell us such moving legends. The next day the master of the Kildare hounds made all necessary arrangements for giving the latest of the revellers the best of pick-me-ups, in the shape of an afternoon gallop, for the Kildare card was coloured for Doneany cross-roads on the 20th. *L'homme propose;* but the foxes expected were not forthcoming on the whole line of the afternoon draw, and Martinstown alone saved the day from the stigma and reproach of blankness; a good fox issued from it, but ended his brief career in a rabbit hole at Ballyshannon.

On the following Friday the Meath hounds drew a very large assembly together to the summit of Summerhill, whence a fine panorama of plain and woodland is gained from the upper windows of Lord Langford's graceful house, built, I should imagine, on Italian lines, if not by an Italian architect. To the north and west the country is poorer, and more subdivided apparently, than the parts of Meath with which one is most familiar in hunting experience, but to the eastward it is quite equal to its well-known type of large pasture fields, and unbroken areas of grass. The grey, ashen-hued woods, interspersed with the vivid green of pine and fir trees, were lit up by eleven o'clock with brilliant sunshine, and the Meath hounds were never seen to better advantage than to-day, while busily drawing the upper woods of this large, undulating park. The last day at Summerhill had been much enjoyed by a large number, who were kept gallop-

ing and jumping for nearly three hours over a charming country, on a beautiful day, while the houndsmen (always now a minority) had a good opportunity of seeing the hounds working patiently after a fox who started with a long lead. All this had been duly remembered to-day, and especially by the Kildare men, who mustered in strong force, including Mr. Forbes, Lord Cloncurry, and Lord Clonmel. The early morning was cold, almost to intenseness, and a white rime had overspread all nature; while the shallower edges of the brooks, curdled into thin ice, attested the severity of the cold. By 11 A.M., however, there was a strong sun overhead, and the going was admirable. The Hill Woods produced a fox very soon (how many were on foot I cannot say), and his first impulse was in a most popular direction towards Larracor; but, headed by something or somebody, he wheeled back into the woods, crossed some moory land, and got into Agher, and thence, I believe, back again into Summerhill.

Pratt's Gorse was the next point of investigation, and the issue was not long in doubt, as a fine fox emerged, with his head pointed straight for Garradice. The hounds were soon on capital terms with him, and Messrs. Butler, Trotter, and A. Macneil, who got off well, had to ride hard to keep up with the flying pack. Out of the Garradice road, on towards Ferns Lock, without pause or hesitation. Then follows a brief period of doubt and investigation and circling about, till the thread is resumed and the key of the puzzle gained. The line leads on towards the low hills beyond Agher, but the glory departed after the first twenty-two minutes, which the few in front rejoiced in greatly. Two good men, whom visitors to Meath and the Ward Union hunting grounds have learned to enrol among the corps of "Les Guides," were more or less in trouble in this expedition. Capt. Montgomery's horse wanted to go somewhat beyond Liverpool pace, and was dangerously fresh (his owner likes and is accustomed to speedy ones); and Col. Lyster, V.C., got crossed when putting on extra steam at a big place, by which means his hunter got his leg

caught in the fork of a tree, and both were extricated from a dirty and embarrassing position not devoid of danger. The next scene was a pleasant lingering over the fleshpots of Agher; while Rainstown furnished the evening fox, who was hunted somewhat deliberately towards Ryndville, being probably the identical animal whose more animated career I described in your columns a few weeks ago.

Many pursuers from the plains of Meath were in hopes of being able to hunt almost in the same neighbourhood, on the following day, with the Kildare hounds, who were due at Hortland Gate at 11 o'clock. This latter meet has been the most fortunate of Kildare fixtures this year, and the champion of Hortland remains unscathed, and probably fit as fox can be to try conclusions with either the dog or bitch pack from the Kildare kennels. Needless to say, houses in the neighbourhood were filled from cellar to garret, and the boxes recently erected in the town of Kilcock by a spirited victualler, by name Haligan, to meet these contingencies, had their due quota of occupants; but Jack Frost relaxed not his grip till late in the day. The hounds came, were paraded, but even the most reckless of neck and prodigal of horseflesh acquiesced in Mr. Mansfield's decision not to disturb Hortland Gorse to-day. Near the seacoast line the Ward Union men essayed hunting the stag on the same day, but the result was a very moderate twenty minutes, and much grief and some disaster to horses.

The Newbridge harriers, who have had a great deal of sport and a fair share of fur on the Curragh edges, gave their followers an extremely fast gallop from Rathascar, through Killashee and Old Town, to Mylerstown, on Monday, the 24th. At the latter place scent died away, and pace subsided. I hear the committee of this small pack give a challenge cup at the approaching Newbridge meeting. Lord Doneraile's hounds have had a few exceptionally good things of late; about the best of which I hear was a run from Drumdeer, when, after two long

rings, the fox went through Annakissa, crossed the Fermoy railway twice, the Great Southern and Western once, and was run into in a fallow field near the Mallow Workhouse. This pack had run into a morning fox previously, after a very fast twenty minutes. From Regan's Rock they had a good hunting run of one hour and twenty-four minutes, which also ended in a kill in the open.

Mr. Cosby, as usual, found foxes plentiful at Sheffield, Cremorgan, and the Hall; while Lord Huntingdon's recent ten days are rapturously spoken of by travellers from those parts. Mrs. Thomason's sudden and melancholy death induced his lordship to postpone a very popular meet at Rathrobbin last week, whence traditionally good foxes, straight-necked and stout, have ever been wont to emerge. The Queen's County record of recent sport reads as follows: Mr. Cosby's hounds, after being stopped by frost on the 10th, 14th, and 15th, were once more at work on the 17th, when they met at Sheffield; here they found at once, and, after one ring, sent their fox through Lamberton to Cremorgan, where—a very unusual circumstance here—owing to some careless stopping, he got to ground in the earths, having pulled away the fastening stone. In the osier beds of Stradbally Hall (the residence of Capt. Cosby, the M.F.H.), which were first visited, a worry-worry was heard, and another fox was tallied away simultaneously. To take the pack from its aromatic banquet of fur and flesh, and clap them on to the line of the traveller, was the work of but a moment or two. It led through the woods by Condron's Gate and down to the Old Hall Bridge, where, just opposite to the lake, the fox jumped down the wall into the Church Lane Wood (12ft. of a drop); then recrossed the river by the Sluice Gates above the Mill Pond, and repassing Condron's Lodge, at the far side by the ice-house, ran up to the hills; then turned back to the Stradbally Woods, and beat the pack by getting into a large rabbit burrow—(while this was going on a third fox broke from the Hall Woods). The time of this

run, which was really little better than a park excursion, was an hour and 40 minutes; but the hounds hunted admirably, and the pace was at times very good. Dunne's Scrub, next tried, did not hold.

On the 20th the hounds were to have drawn Ballyadams, but, owing to information received of a fox and dog having been poisoned not far from the covert, the hounds were taken to Ballykilcavan Woods (Sir Allan Walsh's). Ballyadams, if I recollect right, was the source of some difficulty about two years ago, owing to a dispute between the covert keeper and some neighbours.

On the 22nd the hounds went down to Ballybrophy Station on the Great Southern and Western line, *en route* to the meet at Errill, but the frost proved so hard at the station that they were at once taken home *viâ* Abbeyleix. While in the train the pack set on, worried, and nearly devoured one of the best of the dog hounds, old Woodman (by Lord Portman's Nautilus out of Wanton), who had been used as a sire for the last two seasons, and whom I recollect introducing to your readers as a very fine type of foxhound in your notice of Mr. Cosby's kennels. It is, however, a consolation to know that he is well represented by some promising young hounds. A similar misfortune was recorded in Westmeath not long ago; Primate was, I think, the victim then.

Turning southwards, the United Hunt (Cork) met at one of their best and most popular trysts, Kilbree W. Gate, on the 12th, among the visitors being their old master, Lord Shannon. The first draw was the Strand Road Covert, perhaps the best in the territory, and a good fox issued from it presently, who gave the field a rare good ring of seven miles, broken by only a single check, and that lasted but an instant. A fresh fox now took the place of the hunted one, but scent had declined, and a slow hunting run had its terminus in a sewer near Drumadda.

On the 14th they chevied a good fox from Carrignavar to Blarney railway station at great pace; here he got to ground.

On the 17th they were out at Dundillerick, Lord Shannon being again in the ranks of pursuit, and having the satisfaction of seeing the bitches of his breeding and rearing pull down their fox handsomely in the open, after a long and tedious pursuit through very heavy country. I hear these hounds are growing greatly in popular favour, and that the visits of wandering Zingari sportsmen are by no means angelic—few and far between. The narrative of a single day's sport must do duty for Westmeath this week. On the 21st this pack met at Rosmead, whose present owner, Lord Vaux of Harrowden, has deserted Meath, eastern and western, for Northamptonshire. The coverts here proved non-holding for once; but four or five foxes turned up at South Hill, Mr. Chapman's residence, and after a ring one was sent to ground at Rosmead. A second South Hill fox was next forced out by Clonyn, thence through Clonmaskill towards Coxtown, and here he was headed back to South Hill and killed. A third was rattled away through Mitchelstown towards Clonyn, thence through Sheepstown by Archerstown and Mulliganstown, to the back of the entrance lodge of Rosmead, when darkness intervened.

Amongst the few who remained close to the hounds in this last gallop were, I believe, the master, Mr. Richard Reynell, Mr. Fetherstonhaugh, 60th Rifles, Mr. Francis Chapman, Mr. Chapman of Killure, and Mr. Nugent of Ballinlough.

The Ward Union hounds met at Culmullen cross roads on Monday the 24th (perhaps the most genial outcome of the young year). Their stag took them over a splendid line to Larch Hill, some five miles, I believe, at something like slow steeplechase pace. Then he ran a road with good grass sidings, when the chase became a scurry on the flat for about two miles more; then he lay down exhausted in a ditch, and few who rode this gallop wanted a second stag enlarged.

On the 25th the Kildare hounds met at Newbridge, had a fairly fast run from Curragh; another from Dunmurry Hill to

ground, and a third from Boston, having chopped a fox in the morning in the Cemetery Gorse.

The Louth hounds' story is much as follows: On the 18th they were at Castle Bellingham, and found several foxes in Bragganstown, one of which they hunted round the place for one hour and thirty minutes, but he got under a hollow ash tree when dead beat. Woodtown produced another circle sailer, who was eventually given up. From Corballis they took a fox by Glyde Court, and killed him in Lisrenney; then hunted a brace more till darkness stopped them.

On the 20th they were at Glenmore and found plenty of foxes, but none good goers or inclined to travel far. Three coverts were then drawn with no result, and it was latish when a good fox led them a fast gallop from Mellifont towards Hartle, when the hounds had to be stopped for want of light.

On Saturday here, as elsewhere, frost stopped hunting, but Mr. Filgate gave his field an extra day on Monday at Pepperstown Cross. They found a fox at Ardee House coverts, and, taking him by Red House, Riverstown, and Drumcashell, lost him in a sewer near Bragganstown after a very spirited forty minutes. From this he was bolted by-and-by, when he crossed the river Dee, ran by Richardstown and Tubberdeny, and was rolled over by the pack, who were quite alone, in thirty minutes. An afternoon fox was found in Stackallen, who ran somewhere about the reverse of the last gallop, crossing the Dee by Drumcashell, and, passing Roadstown and Rivertown, was killed at the Red House Gate; forty-five minutes, but nearly all over plough. On the same day the Kilkenny hounds had a rare thirty minutes from Gowran Castle to Bishop's Lock; indeed, all visitors are one in the praise of Kilkenny foxes, Kilkenny scenting-ground, and the Kilkenny pack of hounds, whether patient perseverance or dash be the *desideratum* of the day. I regret extremely to be forced to postpone the narrative of some fine sport in Meath, including a most exemplary twenty-five minutes from Moneymore

to Belmount on Tuesday, the 25th, over a large country; and some good hunting runs in Wexford.

I find I curtailed the Meath gallop from Pratt's Gorse *viâ* Garradice of a few of its minutes; and I also attributed the drawing feat of the nine months' terrier to a kennel puppy. As a matter of fact, this most valorous of terriers is the property of the Hon. Charles Bourke; his name is Hautboy, and he had followed his second horseman, which accounts for his being there.

February 5th, 1876.

Nota magis nulli domus est sua quam mihi lucus
Martis.

The Newbridge course and Newbridge town
I know as scholar knows his gown.

Die Fuchshundgeschichte, or the chronicles of our fox-hounds in Ireland, will commence with the martial and strategic town of my couplet. At eleven of the clock, on the morning of the 25th of January, the Kildare hounds, with their M.F.H. and his lieutenants, fill a corner of the barrack square—the vivid green of the dressed and well-kept ground forming a fine contrast to the white and Belvoir tan of the doghounds, who are the heroes of the day, and the *point de mire* for the many scores of scarlet and black-coated visitors who enter through the great barrack portals. The entire square presently becomes lit up with moving masses of bright colour, and life, animation, and even bustle pervade the quadrangle, as if an ant's nest had been suddenly encroached upon by some foe to the formicular peace. An hour ago trumpets were blaring, artillery waggons were rumbling about, and guns and their limbers were filling up all the gravelled space; now the pageantry of war has been replaced by that of its pleasanter

image. The rites of hospitality, nowhere better understood or more lavishly cultivated than among British officers—be they Cardwellian, Cromwellian, or Wellingtonian—are being administered in the mess rooms of the Queen's Bays and the Royal Horse Artillery. Cutlets and cold pheasants are being discussed to the accompaniment of Rœderer, Ruinart, petits verres, and loving cups of all sorts and compositions. The Bedouins of the mess rooms, hospitable as their namesakes who people the deserts of Arabia, are here, there, and everywhere, in the uniform of the chase and the panoply of war, enacting the part of Knights Hospitallers, and making Newbridge Barracks a pleasant recollection to all visitors. The army musters in strong force in the hunting field to-day—General Seymour and his staff, Col. Stewart, and a number of Queen's Bays officers; a fair proportion of R.H.A.'s; Col. Fane of "Fane's Light Horse," etc.; and as for veterans and emeriti, they would make a small field of themselves. Naturally, there is a goodly show of hunters and second chargers in the square; but, if you are an amateur of the noble quadruped, and fond of seeing his various types, in repose as well as in action, take my advice—steal not a few hours from the night, my boy, but from the cold grey of the morning; be at Newbridge early, and make your way to Mr. Jones's studio, where you will see a roomful of very interesting sketches, intended for large canvases, of horses and hounds, all, whatever their merits or demerits, stamped with an individuality of their own. It is a mile, or rather more, to the edge of the Curragh, where a broken ridge of hillocks clothed with dense gorse, has long harboured foxes—"casuals" and "permanents"—and here is the real meeting place, for it has been guessed by infallible instinct as the "first draw" by innumerable pursuers, whose faces we did not see in Newbridge half an hour ago.

Sir Michael Hicks Beach has run down by train from Dublin to assist at this hunting function; so have Mr. and Mrs. Adare from the Queen's County. The Hon. Mrs. Forbes is warmly

congratulated on her reappearance at the side of a gorse which is supposed to be, and I believe really is, specially under her ægis and care. Capt. Wakefield has forgotten his broken leg of last year, and his bay cob looks as if he would inspire confidence in any one. Mr. Butler, who left his *arm* in the county Dublin, is, as usual, well mounted. Mr. Horace Rochfort rides his well-known flea-bitten grey. Some of Ireland's best chasing form—or if not best, let us say second best—is in the field. Mr. Garrett Moore is riding a very large blood-like bay horse, though a farmer eclipses him in point of size, riding a mammoth horse that Barnum, were he hunting here to-day, would be sure to bid for. Young Mr. Moore is on Morristown. Many of the jocks best known on the far side of the Channel are cantering up and down these hills—Canavan, Paddy Gavin, and so on. The picture is kaleidoscopic; but how is the poor fox, whom we hear of through the deep bass of the hounds in the gorse, to run the gauntlet of so many enemies? A line of chariots and cars flanks him on one side; the array of pursuit is around and in his rear; rustics line an upper tier of hillocks, one man armed with a pitch-fork specially noticeable. It is a good fox—he attempts to break towards the Liffey; he is incontinently repulsed; the worry-worry follows, Master Wadsworth is presented with the brush, and on we canter or gallop, over a mile or two of such turf as we think here unsurpassable, till we come to a large square *enceinte* known as the Curragh Gorse, from which in old times many can recollect about the fastest gallop they ever rode in their lives, when never an obstacle or impediment checked the headlong speed of fox, hounds, and horses, for, it may be, a couple of miles. It *was* a fine bit of covert, but 'tis hollow enough now, as the rabbits have, I hear, done it infinite mischief—the fencing round it is somewhat out of repair if I recollect right. We had no sprinting to-day; so we held on at a nice hand canter till we found ourselves nearing the round towers of Kildare, Mr. P. Doncie's training stables, and a wild brake of unenclosed gorse, from which, presto!

out gallops a good-looking fox, who gave the field a capital view of his brush as he sped along over the short sward of the Curragh. Presently he inclines a bit to the left, and selects some small fields on the edge of the great plain till he emerges not far from Rossmore Lodge, where Capt. Joy, late of the 7th Hussars, has established his training quarters, and has met with fair success, principally in the chasing department. More galloping over the Curragh, another excursion into smallish fields, and a long check in a bit of plough; then the line leads us on gaily enough into the Hill of Allen Road (I know no better definition), out into some green fields, past Mr. Orford's house (there was some grief in jumping out of the road, caused by a high, slippery bank, where a very good heavy weight came down), and so on for about a mile and a half, over grass fields rather unpleasantly divided by thick quickset hedges, which were not to be jumped or scrambled through anywhere, till we find ourselves near the Newbridge Road, and at the foot of some furry hillocks of sand and gravel. Near this point our fox squeezed himself into a rabbit burrow, after a pursuit which, though anything but straight, was certainly over about as good a line as Curragh foxes are in the habit of selecting.

Our next halt is at Dunmurry Gorse, on the eastern slope of a high bluff, where gorse seems indigenous. Thanks to Mr. Medlicott's strict preservation for many seasons, this fox haunt is always tenanted, though a fine show of game and good sport are by no means correlative terms here. Furze ridges abound in the vicinity, and tempt any fox to prefer the chances they offer to a bold excursion into the vale on either side; and so it befel us to-day. After a ring or two, our fox held on over the ridges I spoke of for a mile or so, when he dipped down into a narrow valley and breasted the "Red Hills," which in their conformation and vesture are not altogether unlike Dunmurry Hill. Inclining to the right, our fox now looked as if he must journey downwards over the vale; but at a point somewhere near Dalystown he "knew a bank,"

and on this bank he drew a cheque which arrested our pursuit entirely. A somewhat circuitous route (seemingly) brought us at last to Boston Gorse, a very thick and luxuriant covert, which owes its origin to Lord Valentia's hunting enterprise. It always holds a fox, or foxes, and I have seen one or two good gallops from it; probably their number would be considerably increased were not Dunmurry and the Red Hills so temptingly near (as the crow flies). To-day confirmed its holding reputation, but for the majority of the field a short ring or two was all the hunting it afforded. A dozen or so who stayed on, unmindful of waning light, had, I hear, a really good twenty or twenty-five minutes from it towards Milltown, when their fox got to ground in the same place where five of his brethren, who were disturbed during the day, sought sanctuary, as I heard. Four or five doubles, of such colossal proportion that an English huntsman of some nerve pronounced them unridable, were, I was told, surmounted successfully by the happy dozen. Their courage must be admired, as in the gloaming they must have worn a most menacing and sinister aspect.

Ball succeeds ball, and the tambourine is kept a-rowling, in the pithy and idiomatic language of Mr. Pigg, of Handley Cross fame. Last week the "muse of the many-twinkling feet" was busy in the stately hall of Moore Abbey; to-night (Wednesday, the 27th), the dancers congregate in the Town Hall of Naas; and, as these Kildare anniversaries maintain their traditional popularity and prestige, it were superfluous to add that not only is Kildare's capital full to overflowing, but that the elastic properties of the country houses for many a mile round have been tested to the utmost. Our present business is with an enormous meet in Naas on Wednesday forenoon, of which Leamington or Cheltenham might envy the proportions!

Invitat genialis hiems, curasque resolvit

never was truer literally, for a somewhat dubious morning of

alternate cloud and sunshine settled into the balmiest and fairest noontide which the young year has yet offered us. As for "Care," the black spectre which the poet tells us sits behind the horseman, it must have vanished under the genial and unwonted atmospheric influences and the beautiful spectacle of several hundreds of well-mounted pursuers, a score or more of well-habited figures, and a perfect procession of cars and carriages wending their way past Gowran Grange to the well-known gorse only a couple of large fields distant from the grand stand of Punchestown. "The Pope he leads a happy life," says the poet, with a licence which perhaps Pio Nono might feel inclined to question at times. The Sultan probably does not lead too happy a life, if all one hears be true; but even the Sultan—nay, even his bondholders and Mr. Hamond himself—must have dismissed dull care, for the moment at least, as they surveyed the large field which bounds this gorse, now filled with animated groups, Watteau-like in colour and brilliancy, parading about, for a certain licence seems to mark the day, and the M.F.H. does not keep his line as taut and "well dressed" as usual. Ladies are walking about, for the day is almost warm enough for haymaking, and the turf is light and elastic. There is ample time to take stock of the visitors, for the fox of the gorse is in a most stay-at-home mood, and the covert is very thick and matted. Mr. and Mrs. Adare belong almost equally to the Queen's County as to Kildare; Mr. Hamilton Stubber is in the same category; and so is Mr. Horace Rochfort. Sir R. Power has revisited Kildare after a long interval, but her ladyship is not mounted to-day, as I hear she had a fall in Kilkenny, when going in her usual brilliant style, on Monday last. Mr. Duncan represents America and Leicestershire; Mr. Frewen the Cambridge Drag-hounds, of whom he is the master. Mr. and Mrs. Macneil, Mr. and Lady Fanny Lambert, and one or two more, have come from Meath, and so has Capt. C. Ponsonby. The Queen's Bays have turned out in very considerable numbers, and the 17th Lancers

are also represented. Mr. Burroughs has come from the north, and Col. Frank Chaplin and Mrs. Chaplin have forsaken Dublin for the day.

At last the dilatory fox emerges, and points to that Silliott bog covert, which, I think, no one cares much for or wishes to ride to; a turn to the left brings him round by Mr. Keely's farm (there is often a useful young horse on this farm), as if Eadestown was the point aimed at; but he hugs the left all along, and presently we are jumping the low boundary wall of Punchestown, galloping by the grand stand; again in the air, as we jump the old Downshire wall at the back of the stand, and in another field at our starting point. It is a fast ring, and, between cannons and blunders at the walls (they were really far from high), there was not a little grief sustained, one lady having an awkward-looking fall at the wall, and another lady pursuer a narrow escape.

No amount of pressing would induce the fox to make a second turn, so we left him to his sulks, and repaired to Eadestown Gorse. This little covert was pretty well surrounded and walled in, and our fox had to ring back once before he made his final exit in the Punchestown direction. Inclining to the right, however, he crossed a couple of roads, passed the earths at Newtown which *were* stopped to-day, and then led us at good pace over Mr. Hendrick's fine grass farm, till we came to Newtown Mills and a small ravine. A high bank, only practicable in one or two spots, here caused some disaster to the ranks of pursuit, a hard-riding farmer on a grey filling up a chasm temporarily; but all are soon going again, and after topping a hill we are galloping through Furniss, in the plantations of which our fox sheltered himself, and, though he was hunted for a few fields towards Palmerston, scent died away and we lost him.

Bishopscourt Gorse is a sheet anchor to the Kildare Hunt; it always holds, and its foxes have, with very few exceptions, chosen fine lines of country for their excursions, while its small area prevents delay or uncertainty, and difficulties as to ejectment.

To-day's fox was no exception, and the gorse was true to its traditions and usage. He broke away at once in the direction of Pigeon Hill, then swung round to the left toward the Dublin entrance into the park, and, crossing the road, raced up Oughterard Hill, passed the ruin which crowns its summit, and, skirting Cullen's Wood, ran past Boston Gorse and over Mr. Burton's farm. Here, I believe, a second fox was afoot or crossed the line, and caused a little delay; but we are soon in motion again, galloping over part of the red-coat racecourse of last year, past Baron Rath, and eventually back again to Bishopscourt, though of the last stage I cannot speak confidently, as I did not witness it. This was a fine hunting run, with very fast bits through it, and it certainly covered a very great extent of country, in which I do not think more than a single bit of plough was encountered.

Since I wrote the last paragraph I hear that we, the vast majority of the day's huge *cortége*, lost the cream of a fine pursuit by deserting the ranks what time our hunted fox tried the sewer at Baron Rath and was taken back again to Bishopscourt. The sequel of this fox history was somewhat as follows. After a vast deal of rattling round the park at Bishopscourt, he was forced out once more in the direction of Pigeon's Hill, when he skirted Johnstown Kennedy, and, inclining to the left, won his weary way to Athgoe earths. During the latter part of this run I am told the hounds had got very near their fox, and that pace had improved considerably. Very few had remained to the bitter end, or sweet end, from whichever point of view you look at it; but among the stayers were Major the Hon. E. Lawless, Lord Clonmell, and his kinsman, Mr. Horace Rochfort. It is no treason, but simply fact, to call the latter gentleman a veteran sportsman—perhaps not so much in years as in hunting experience; and, since his long and serious illness of last year, observers say that his riding performance has been less ambitious than before. To-day, however, brought back the

old "form," as an eye-witness told me, and, relieved of the incubus of a rushing, stampeding crowd, I hear he sent the grey along in front right gallantly. Local topographers make this run fully twelve miles. Of the ball that crowned a very pleasant and successful day I do not intend to write at length, though it offers a fertile theme for eloquence and word painting. Few who assisted at the merry evening's function could take up their parable with Mr. Toole and exclaim, "And yet I am not happy!" and if they were not happy they should have been. The honorary secretary of the hunt, Mr. David Mahoney, worked hard and worked long at perfectioning the details and utilising all the appliances which the county affords. The result was perhaps the best hunt ball which the gaunt old Rath Haus of Naas ever witnessed—the best lighted, best decorated, and best adapted for the comfort and delectation of *débutantes* and dowagers, dancers, talkers, and on-lookers. The *spolia opima* of the chase, the implements, paraphernalia, and vanities of the *mundus venaticus*, were grouped together into a most artistic trophy by Mrs. Moore, of Killashee. The music was the music of Liddell. The supper was done by Lovell and Mills, real artists in their way. The beauty represented the fair types of Saxondom, the darker replica of American cousinship, and the mobility and sparkle of our own island. The toilettes were virginal in simplicity in a few instances, and mediæval in magnificence in more.

J'aime la simplicité,
Mais cependant, à mes yeux,
Avec l'or et la dentelle
Je m'ajuste fort mieux,

is the burden of most nineteenth-century ladies. A good gallop the day after the ball might have been sighed for as a pick-me-up by a few, and, if my memory serves me, such was an old Kildare custom; but in this age of progress and railway rapidity people have so many enjoyments—often distant ones—that 'tis hard to

chain a restless crowd to any single spot of earth by even the rosiest fetters, the most alluring programme. I do, however, recollect three consecutive or all but consecutive hunting days round Naas in one ball week; and the fact dwells in my memory all the more tenaciously from the circumstance of a soldier sportsman having ridden the same horse each day—a proof that we have somewhat degenerated in the stamp of wear-and-tear, cut-and-come-again hunters; for there *was* sport each day, and the man was well carried. By the way, while alluding to old memories, I may mention that, much as is said and written about pig-sticking just now, no one has alluded to Jamaica as a likely place for its cultivation; and yet such is the fact. Nor have any of your correspondents, while writing about American stud farms, particularly Mr. Aitcheson Alexander's, ever alluded to a fact which struck me much on my visit there—that Scythian, the Chester Cup winner, became by his good handling an extremely fast trotter.

On the 28th the Kildare hounds met a fairly numerous party at Gormanstown chapel, an ecclesiastical edifice of the simplest severity of style, standing in a wilderness of greenery, without any annexes of houses or villages beyond a cottage or two, probably occupied by the sacristan or other reverend official. I think Mr. Mansfield has revived it as a trysting place, for I have not seen it coloured on the Kildare cards for some seasons, if my memory deceive me not. Within nice cantering distance of Newbridge and the Curragh, it is always sure to attract a good many pursuers from those horsy latitudes, and I think a very fair proportion of the field out to-day belonged to one or other branch of Her Majesty's service, and wore the royal livery alternately with the war paint of the chase. The Queen's Bays preponderated as a corps, and among their mounts are a few very nice light and medium weight horses. Mr. Stewart Duckett had journeyed from Carlow, Mr. Adare had come from the Queen's County, and Mr. Frewen might be supposed to represent

the shires of England, and more particularly Cambridgeshire, a county hardly comparable, to a hunting eye, to what he rode over to-day. He was on a very clever Cork mare, one of the old Arthur breed, who have many merits, not the least of them being that of jumping and staying. She vindicated the family specialities well to-day, though she *did* come down once. The day was soft and warm, with a menace of rain, which, however, held off happily, and at one time it looked as if we were in for a fog; but that threatening, too, passed away. There was not a breath of wind stirring, and the lightest-clad sportsmen were, I fancy, the happiest, for covert coats must have been a tremendous incubus when going hard.

Two pursuers, carring from Naas to the Chapel Cross-roads, met a fox, whom they described as a splendid specimen of his race, with his head pointed towards Giltown Park, and his brush towards Cryhelp—a pilgrim of love probably to the rosy bowers of the latter place, and somewhat belated in his return homewards. He crossed the boundary fences of the road without swerving an inch, and seemed not to heed the cars or passengers one iota. The cavalcade is soon set in motion towards Giltown Park, and presently we are drawn up in array outside the well-enclosed, well-preserved area of gorse in a corner of the park. This gorse always holds somehow, though its foxes have been severely handled this season, and one killed not far from its home, unable to break through the circle which was formed all around him as he strove to issue forth into the open. To-day was no exception, and after some ten minutes or so of rattling about inside the gorse, out he breaks, runs across the whole extent of the park by the lake, at a pace which extended fast horses, and left the slow ones behind. Crossing the Kilcullen Road, he enters Sallymount, runs the breadth of its large lawn, and, crossing the Naas Road, makes his way along the Liffey banks to the Black Thorns; thence across the Ballymore Eustace Road to Moorhill (once one of Kildare's happiest coverts), when he

was bustled about for half an hour or more, horses finding plenty of occupation in climbing up the steep pinches of these most undulating grounds, and jumping high banks when half blown. Next the line leads us back into Harristown *viâ* Rochestown, across a gap in the park wall, round the Moorhill ravines into Upper Cauny Court, then Lower Cauny Court, and out of Upper Cauny Court, till patience was well-nigh exhausted; and I fancy the poor fox must have been in the same plight, corporally as well as mentally, for hounds had been hunting steadily for far more than an hour, some twenty minutes of which were as fast as could be ridden. At last there is a change. In the high grass fields which overlook Moorhill, out of a furze brake up jumps a fine fox, sleek of condition and smooth of fur, which could hardly be our hunted one—unless, indeed, the five minutes' start which he had gained had enabled him to renovate the outer fox into a marvellous transformation; and foxes, like their cognate felons and burglars, are wonderfully quick in freshening up their looks and exteriors. Be that as it may, he started handsomely for the open country, with no longing, lingering looks at the parks and coverts behind him. Cryhelp Gorse seemed his bent, and in that direction he ran for about a mile, when he swung to the right, ran all through Mr. Kilbee's fine grass farm and large enclosures, and, selecting a good bit of vale, though it was holding in bits, crossed a road or two (on one of which was about the neatest and best-horsed mail cart I have observed in Ireland—Major Borrowes, as I hear, does this good service to his neighbourhood), and led us at great pace past Mount Fish, through a small plantation, where I believe the second whip came to great grief, over a few big banks and wide ditches, by the edge of the Grange Beg Fields, if not actually in them; over a very high bank, into the Dunlavin Road (led here by Mr. W. Kennedy, ex-M.F.H., on his smart chestnut horse), through the wide grass pastures of Logatrina, past Thornton House; then down into another valley, watered by a sluggish brook, which we fortunately found

the shires of England, and more particularly Cambridgeshire, a county hardly comparable, to a hunting eye, to what he rode over to-day. He was on a very clever Cork mare, one of the old Arthur breed, who have many merits, not the least of them being that of jumping and staying. She vindicated the family specialities well to-day, though she *did* come down once. The day was soft and warm, with a menace of rain, which, however, held off happily, and at one time it looked as if we were in for a fog; but that threatening, too, passed away. There was not a breath of wind stirring, and the lightest-clad sportsmen were, I fancy, the happiest, for covert coats must have been a tremendous incubus when going hard.

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bridged, till presently we find ourselves passing the Dunlavin church, having jumped in and out of a road, and sailing away gaily in the direction of Tynte Park, which lay about a couple of miles in front. The field was now by no means a large one, but it was keen as cayenne; and a gentleman on a fine brown horse, who rode, I think, with one arm, and is not unknown in the Ward Union country, was perhaps the chief offender, and certainly caught the master's eye and the master's tongue more than once. Now we are galloping under one of those green raths which are said to have been Danish forts or sepulchres; it was not destined for a fox tomb to-day. After a few fields more, a large furzy bank divided the field—eight or ten, perhaps more, on one side, six or seven pursuers on the other. Two couple of hounds crossed this bank, and the division on the far side followed them right on to the borders of Rathsallagh. Meantime the body of the pack turned back, and, I believe, sent their fox to ground in a burrow by the edge of a mound, where, strange to say, a hare, hard coursed the other day in a match, took refuge. This pursuit, if we suppose that it *was* a fresh fox at Moorhill, was one of the finest of the season; if, on the other hand, it was continuous, it was a most extraordinary performance—for, though very circuitous and ringing at one stage, when Moorhill was the fox's pivot, it covered a very great extent of country, and could not have been very much under twenty miles, lasting as it did during half the day, or rather half the daylight; for if you allow eight miles Irish, or even seven, per hour for the run, fast bits and slow bits included, and it last continuously for three hours, you will find you have exceeded a score of English miles considerably. Knowing the localities pretty well, I should not myself have estimated the distance run over at anything like that amount of mileage; but, unless one carries something equivalent to a pedometer or hippometer, it is impossible to make anything but a very approximate guess about the length foxhounds and horses have gone, and the time standard ma be as true as any

other. Miss Kilbee was going well in front all through, and so was her father on a young horse of great promise. Among the visitors Messrs. Frewen, Adare, and Stewart Duckett were never behind; and of the soldier contingent Mr. Lister Kaye and Mr. Lambert, with one or two more, were very well carried. One or two good horses succumbed towards the close of the fray, and I fear a very bold Dublin hunter will be in hospital for some time.

A melancholy accident to a popular pursuer, Mr. Joyce, is reported from Galway, the day the county hounds met at Cregclare, Lord Clanmorris's residence. I believe it happened jumping a gate, or half jumping it. Hunting in Meath has maintained its reputation without check or break since Christmas, witness the narrative of a single day's sport this week, when the pack met at Tankardstown and drew Hussey's Gorse first, a large covert on a high hill, with a couple of acres of young plantation adjacent. It held a brace of foxes at least, and one of them took some forcing before he would be sent out into the open, when at last he broke in view on the lower side of the wood, pointing at first for Parsonstown, but inclining to the right of it, passed Grange Geath, a covert which borders the Louth country without entering it, and, running a bee line, held on till he reached Mellifont a Louth covert, where the earths were open, he beating the hounds by about two minutes—a fact learnt from Mr. Smith, the proprietor, who was walking through his woods and saw him go to ground. The distance covered was about seven miles Irish. The hounds were not cast, and the pace steady and sustained all through, the country trying, and grief abundant. Bengerstown was the next draw, after Mr. Donovan's hospitalities had occupied a few minutes *en route* thither. It was 2.30 when reached, and near it were a few good men, notably a south-country pursuer who had *suffered* shipwreck in the first gallop. The find was a quick one, and the fox was raced to a spot near Ricetown, where he got to ground most unfortunately, and to the great chagrin of

its sporting proprietor. Headstown covert, belonging to Mr. Gerrard, held a good fox, who ran very fast before the pack for some twenty-five minutes, till he got to ground near Adare. Altogether a capital day's sport, and much enjoyed.

The Wexford annals of the passing month are less sanguinary than might be expected; but, though few gory masks graced the saddle dees, sport was by no means wanting.

Thus, on the 5th inst., when Mr. Beatty's hounds met at the Flax Mills, they found their first fox at Newtown Plantation, and ran him to the edge of Dunbrody Park, where he was headed and turned towards a fine open country, his course passing near Iretown Abbey, and Rathmurney, then along the edge of the Bog of Knocklee, over the hill towards Ballysop, and so on till finally rolled over, after a chase of 1 hour 30 minutes, most of it over a fine wild line of country. On the 10th they met at Ballysop. Bad earth-stopping spoilt the first gallop; the second, from Alderton, was short but sweet. On the 14th they were at Rosegarland, and had a capital 50 minutes through Longraigue, Newcastle, and Tinacarrig, where their fox got to ground. On the 17th, after running a brace of foxes into rabbit holes at Dranagh, they found a third in Wells, and forced him away in the teeth of a strong sou'-wester towards Island, thence through Ballinahone to Oulard, where a plantation sheltered him for some moments; and a fox, supposed to be a fresh one, taking his place, the line led back to Wells, the fox saving himself in a main drain, out of which the stakes had rotted. The first twenty-five minutes of the run beat off the field.

On the 19th, after a short spin from Ballylaan to the top of Miler's Park and back again, they drew Stokestown, and took a fox out of it, through Landscape and Killowen, till he got to ground in a rabbit hole at Camolin, after a good fifty minutes.

On the 21st, Harperstown was a blank; but Bricketstown held a brace in a small gorse outside the covert. One was taken by Dungear through Clover Valley and Helbourne, getting to ground

Vincent Brooks Day & Son, Lith.

"OH SURE YOUR HONOUR I KNEW THIS WAS YOUR HORSE WHEN THE GENT MOUNTED THE T'OTHER"

in a newly-made drain, one pursuer and a whip alone seeing the final stage of this run, the last thirty-five minutes of which were all over grass.

On the 24th they were at Wilton, which was full of foxes, but rather of a home-staying turn, so the "master's gorse" was next tried, in hopes of a repetition of its recent success. It proved blank, though in a field close by a good fox turned up, who was headed back and nearly murdered at starting; but when fairly on his legs he ran by Moneyhore to Dranagh, where he was viewed apparently sinking; but in a thick gorse he got five minutes' law (perhaps a fresh fox turned up), and when forced out made Killoughran, then held on for Woodbrook, where another bit of strong gorse helped him, till he beat the hounds finally into a stronghold near Warren's Gorse, after a long run of 1 hour 45 minutes.

After the fine hunting run in Kildare on Friday, 28th, which I have just described, I felt a southern impulse—*in nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas*—"fresh fields and pastures new," and all that sort of thing. A *grande vitesse* train of the Great Southern and Western line passed Sallins station at 8.27 or so, which allowed ample time for dinner and a start, and this line, if not famous for its speed, may plume itself on its safety, *tutus si tardus* being its motto; so, if your feelings incline towards sleep and dreamland, anxieties of mind as to collisions need not mar or murder your repose. You will be at Mallow, on the Blackwater, by 1.15 more or less, a town well-known to anglers as well as to hunting men, and there I mean to leave you. On the Saturday Lord Doneraile's hounds were to meet at "Two Pot House," within easy distance of Mallow by car or hack. Let us glance at the assemblage of hounds, horses, and men before they are put into covert ten minutes hence. Let me state *in limine* that I saw no two pot house or one pot house, so I cannot evolve from my inner consciousness a description of the locale. The hounds were in a green field by the roadside, with J. Walsh, their

huntsman, mounted on a clever-looking piebald, that, had he only been branded, I should have "guessed" as South American by origin. He proved himself soon as clever a hunter as huntsman need wish to ride in any country, trappy or big. Twenty-two couple of well-coloured hounds are about him, principally bitches, with a few sire hounds interspersed. First impressions of a pack are often truest, as of a horse, and these fill your eye at once for symmetry and condition and high bearing; in fact, you can hardly, unless hypercritical, find fault with more than a single hound in the lot—Sportive, by the Belvoir Selim, for she is mean of aspect and carries her tail villanously, and is shy and furtive-looking; but a second glance will show you fine muscular back and loins and good second thighs, and in her work she is, I hear, as good as can be. The field is a very small one: Major and Mrs. Johnson, both admirably mounted; Major Graves, on a good-stamped Tipperary horse; Capt. Bell, on a clever-looking grey—of course an Arthur; a stranger from the metropolis, a breaker or two, a yeoman farmer or two, a lad on a clever galloway; *voilà tout*, save and except Viscount Doneraile himself, who is riding a brilliant-looking hunter, but his lordship has, from rheumatism, been forced to give up riding across country as a rule, so I did not see the talent of this horse or his second hunter at all tested.

Let me dismiss the *mise en scène*, so to speak, by saying that his lordship is recollected by many as Lord Henry Bentinck's successor in the Burton country, and that hounds, horses, and men have turned out as such antecedents might well warrant.

Our first draw was as fine a covert as one often meets with—laurels and fir trees in one part, larches and brambles in another, and a gorse *pur et simple* in a third. Woodcocks rose out of it in numbers, but no fox, strange to say, was spoken to, or drag acknowledged, by a single hound. I should state that its name is Hazelwood, and why it did not harbour a leash of foxes at least, in a well-foxed country, passes my comprehension. We are now *en route* for Cahirmee Gorse, which is near the celebrated fair

green of the same name, so well-known to most horse amateurs in England as perhaps the best horse fair in the world, Ballinasloe being supposed to be on the decline, so far as horseflesh goes. The country round is simply a succession of easy undulations of light land, bare as your palm of timber and hedgerow, with plough and grass alternating in about the same proportions as in Kilkenny, Waterford, and Louth—a magnificent hunting vista. On the way to the gorse you will have to jump an odd three-and-a-half-foot wall, and perhaps a bank or two; so you will get on terms with your mount in time. This gorse was equally blank; so on we trotted to Cloheen, where there was a very small bit of wood and shrubbery, and here we soon moved a fox, who had probably been disturbed from the adjoining gorse. The hounds settled to him very soon, ran him parallel to a road which leads I know not whither for a bit, then started off over a beautiful tract of light-riding country divided by walls and stone-faced banks, going at fine pace till we came to Kilburn, where in some plough they were brought to their noses for a few moments. Mrs. Johnson was riding her perfect hunter with the greatest *àplomb* and confidence all the way, taking an ugly-looking gate which stopped a gapway as it came in her horse's stride. From Kilburn we came soon to a marshy field, with a high bank wired all round, save in one spot. This Walsh took as it came; we looked and quested about us for an easier one, but failed to find it. In the meantime the hounds had taken their fox over a hill (known as Henessey's Hill), through a ravine, and now the fine timber and deer park of Doneraile Court are before us, and, after a rather perilous scramble through a brook and ravine, which nearly sent a fine big mare and her rider to their fathers, we are in the park. Fallow deer are rushing about, and much rattling and bustling through the woodlands winds up with a "gone to ground" close by Lady Doneraile's own garden. Lunch at the Court over, our second draw is a fine gorse clothing a wind-swept hill, Knockbarry by name; it is very thick, and the wind blows cold and keenly. The first "gone

away" proves a fiasco; the second is all right, and the fox leads us at great pace over the fairest of countries, once the Great Southern and Western line was crossed (walls again, and high stone-faced banks), for about a mile and a half, as I should roughly estimate it, till just as we have jumped a brook successfully we find our fox has gone to ground in the cleft of a limestone rock overhanging the stream—Poulawadera is the Milesian name. It was four o'clock or past it, and we had to canter fast to reach Kilmaclennan, in anything like time—a fine wild gorse, but now becoming rather hollow, and it is said never to fail. It was soon pretty well surrounded by horsemen and footmen, but in ten minutes a good-looking fox raced away out of one corner of it, visible to all. It is on the same side as the grand old ruin of the same name. In something less than a mile Irish, as I should judge, we are by a plantation known as Boher Ascrol, and here the fox got a respite of four or five minutes; but we are soon going again, and now, once a road is crossed, about as fast as horses can gallop; for, though the turf (it is all turf here) is very light, scent seems to have quickened wonderfully as the light wanes. Presently we are on the edge of a large double, which the whips get over. Walsh, riding a four-year-old, as good a wall-jumper as I have often seen, pauses; so do the field; a Robin mare gets over it cleverly. All manage to get over or round it, and now we are sailing away in the gloaming, with Buttevant on the right, and Curry Mount in front. Thus far into the bowels of a strange county had your scribe gone; daylight was fast waning —indeed, to some eyes, there was next to none—and the rough high and dry banks, scarped with stones, briar, and rocks, loomed most repulsive in the *demi-jour*. So, the first road gained, he made tracks for his temporary lares. What fortuned the pack was, I believe, something like this: when darkness overtook him, Walsh collected his hounds together, and turned his young horse's head for the kennels; presently the pack started off at score after a travelling fox they winded; with difficulty all were collected

at "the assembly," save some two or three couple, and thus concluded a very fine day's sport, which began badly and ended well. The glory of a large field was all awanting. The small field present reaped the benefit of their absence, and, as *all* rode, *all* enjoyed the day extremely.

I regret much to see the name of the Hon. H. Fitzwilliam, well-known here as a hard and straight pursuer and the liberal promoter of every sort of sport, a sufferer from a hunting accident. He will have the good wishes of all classes connected with hunting here for his speedy recovery.

On the same day (the 29th) the Duhallow hounds found plenty of foxes, and killed two, but without much sport. I am forced to omit several day's hunting history from want of space.

February 12th, 1876.

Having seen twenty-two couple of Lord Doneraile's hounds at work on a day when scent was anything but decided—low and catchy in the morning, but quickening into something far warmer and more congenial to hounds as the daylight began to wane—I was naturally anxious to have a look at them at home, and Lord Doneraile was kind enough to gratify my wishes on the day following, and under circumstances when all masters of hounds would not have acceded to such a request; for the hounds had been full fed, and the temporary *embonpoint* in the gastric region developed after a ravenous meal certainly does impair the symmetrical racing outline of a foxhound—as the trimming and ballasting of a clipper ship have much to do with the beauty and elegance of her lines, at least to the eye of a landlubber.

Speaking of the hounds leads of course to a word or two anent the kennels; and, as the way by which I was conducted thither

led through a portion of the park of Doneraile Court, and what seemed to me interminable stretches of garden and pleasaunce, I may as well devote a paragraph or two to the surroundings—remarking *in limine* that, as a saint in linen is said by a very good judge of human nature to be twice a saint in lawn, so kennels framed as it were in a wilderness of fine timber, beautiful shrubs, and the mingled greenery of masses of ilex, yew and holly, rhododendrons and pines, with abundant little parks and paddocks of their own, must have a great advantage to the eye over equally good buildings placed by the roadside or in a bare field, without any adventitious reliefs or decorations. The hounds, too, will not suffer from the strong contrasts of colour, or from being viewed "under the shade of melancholy boughs," as Jacques called them to suit his own mood. Doneraile Court, then, stands on a fine elevation, and commands a good view of many hundreds of acres of very undulating ground, bounded by woods of larger and older timber than you generally meet in Ireland; while the Awbeg, which the author of the 'Fairy Queen' rendered classical so long as the English tongue exists, divides the park into hemispheres not altogether unequal. It is a nice brawling stream, affected by salmon for spawning purposes, and the home of good trout, not larger than the Cherwell at Oxford, but infinitely livelier. The silvery and ashen hues of the old grey woods are lightened up by magnificent pines, and by masses of rhododendrons thick and tangled as on their native Himalayas; while the ilices near the house are perhaps the finest to be seen, very much larger and better furnished than the fine specimens at Doddington Park, Sir Gerald Codrington's residence in Gloucestershire. Here are the first larches planted in Ireland, something more than a century ago, and very well they have grown; in fact, the contrast of colour and variety in the woodlands is quite a study, and a covert of pampas grass, where woodcocks are to be found well lodged, is somewhat of a novelty. The Court itself is a composite old pile, without any special feature to catch the eye,

and is not equal to the park. I believe it was built, or part of it at any rate, by that Sir Wm. St. Leger whom Queen Elizabeth sent over to control and civilise Munster, and has since been patched and added to by succeeding generations, till probably the present structure as little resembles the Lord Deputy's residence as the Virgin Queen's knife after its various metamorphoses at the cutler's. The whole park and neighbourhood, including a very flourishing-looking village, where some of the shop windows would do no discredit to a country town even in England, wears an air of venerable age and repose, as if it had grown up under the ægis of powerful baronial protection, and had escaped those spasmodic rebellionisms which left their blighting stamp on so many other places in Ireland.

The kennels are long thatched buildings, with capital yards attached, forming two sides of a parallelogram. A feeder's slated house divides the two thatched portions, and the abattoir is so far removed, and the drainage, etc., is so good, that nothing unpleasant, or even ultra "doggy" or "houndy," assails the nose. Plenty of room, plenty of air, wide benches, large exercise paddocks, and space abundant, seems the rule here. Perhaps the first thing that will strike the visitor's ears will be the sonorous fact that, whereas in every other kennel, or nearly every other, that he will have inspected in Ireland, the English dialect is pervasive, and hounds are alternately rated, scolded, petted, invited, or caressed "with the oaths of British commerce and the accents of Cockaigne," here English is spoken *more Milesiano*, and the patois of Cork alone breaks mellifluously on the tympanum. Hounds seem equally intelligent to both, and are not fastidious in which *bocca* an invitation to dinner is orally conveyed. Kindness seems the kennel rule, and the discipline was, I must say, exemplary; for neither whip nor offensive weapon of any sort or kind was handed to any of the party, along with the kennel coat, as we proceeded to make our inspection.

Passing by the elder hounds: Actress, by Regent out of Abigail, is a large dark-coloured bitch, with almost substance and bone

enough for a sire hound had her sex been changed; she is a four-season huntress, and a very remarkable hound in every way. Rarity, by the same sire out of Rachel, and of the same age, is another very fine type, with rare back, loins, and shoulders. Among the three-year-olds, Hector, also by Regent out of Hasty, is a very good-looking hound, and said to be keen enough to dig out a fox single-handed. Seaman is a very true-shaped hound, though not very large or very fashionable, while Sirius is all fashion, though perhaps a little beyond the regulation standard; both are by Selim out of Audible. Crimson is an extremely neat hare-pied hound of two seasons, by Denmark out of Crocus. Fairstar, by Regent out of Fancy, has all the quality her pedigree would indicate; while Helen and Hostess, by Dexter out of Hasty, are very taking two-year-olds. Sportive, another two-year-old, by the Belvoir Selim out of Redbreast, wears herself badly; but a more compactly-built combination of strength and activity it were hard to find anywhere, and I am told her working reputation is very high.

Among the yearlings I think the pick of the basket is to be found:

Aimwell and Angus, by Selim out of Affable, are a very fine pair of hounds; the former, a light-coloured dog, would be hard to beat for bone; his brother is a very handsome white and tanned hound.

Dainty and Delicate, by Governor out of Distich—the former a beautifully light-coloured bitch—are very taking. So are

Fortune and Fatima, by Senator out of Fancy; the former with second thighs which would sell a weight-carrying hunter.

Gamester, by Mr. Watson's Singer out of Geraldine, is a nice stuffy hound that looks like lots of work.

Guider, Grampian, Gaylad, Gracious, and Gaudy, by Governor out of Alice, are a very fine family group, of which the first on the list is perhaps justly, so far as looks go, entitled to his pride of place.

Hopeful and Heroine, by Selim out of Hasty, have the Belvoir stamp all over, as they are entitled to by pedigree.

Redmond, by the Duke of Rutland's Ruler out of Redcap, is, I think, the finest hound of the pack, and in his work he fully bears out the promise of his symmetry.

Ranter, Rubicon, Rosebud, Rival, Rosamond, Rapture, and Rakish, by Mr. Watson's Singer out of Rosary, are a beautiful septette, as they should be, tracing down as they do from Mr. Osbaldeston's celebrated Ranter in direct line. The first and fourth were prize puppies, and at the last Cork show four hounds of this pack won a handsome silver cup, of which John Walsh is justly proud.

There are some nice very highly-bred horses in the stables, but for the most part hardly equal to more than 13st. A five-year-old mare, by Robin, however, out of a Sir Hercules mare, is a notable exception, and the way in which she jumped a double and brook on Saturday stamped her at once as an accomplished huntress of high caste. A very level bay, four years old, also promises to develope into a very grand horse. Most of them are sired by Citadel, Robin, Plum Pudding, Hunting Horn, Wild Oats and The Drake. I should have included Scalesman in my list, a *ci-devant* chaser, now turned into a very perfect hunter.

Tuesday forenoon was about as wet and unpromising a morning as one often encounters. The skies were leaden; the wind was hushed, and an unlimited liability downpour was all that a glance out of doors betokened. Lord Doneraile's hounds met at Oldcourt, a comfortable residence belonging to Mr. Morrogh, not far from the Park or Court, where huge laurel brakes often harbour foxes. We drew them in vain, however, to-day, for which the heavy and continuous rainfall may be held accountable. The field naturally on such a morning was somewhat select, as nothing but a loyal love to foxhunting and its promoters would have brought men or women away from their homes in such weather, and the ranks of pursuit were graced by one, and only

one, fair figure *en amazone.* The cavalcade was soon set in motion (I think it comprised about a score, including Mr. Bowen, of Bowen's Court, Mr. Oliver, and Major and Miss White), and followed the hounds into a sort of off-shoot of Doneraile Park, on the far side of the village, where from an eminence we surveyed the hounds drawing a spinny known as "Boubilee," on the beautiful banks of the Awbeg, and had the satisfaction presently of seeing them force out of its recesses a fine fox, who gave us a good view of his Greyhound-like proportions and sleek light bay fur. After some feinting and dodging he left the river banks, and, quitting this part of the park, ran for a bit into the open, passed a newly-erected parsonage house, and then jumped the high wall which bounds what is called the North Park of Doneraile Court. Twenty-five couple of hounds were out to-day, and it was beautiful to witness their eager efforts, sometimes unavailing, to scale the great masonry barrier; all got over, I think, but a couple and a half or so, and they were soon on the line somehow, for scent was breast high, and hounds positively revelled in it. The fox's course took him over the Awbeg, and ended in an earth in the garden, where foxes are often brought out I hear, as Lord Doneraile holds foxes to be no worse enemies to gardening than ducks and owls, the only mischief they do being when heaths are put out, when they use them freely as mats, to the injury of the plants.

While on this subject, I may mention that one of the sights of Doneraile Court are four tame foxes (one of them a sable Icelander), kennelled in front of the house, with whom you will see the hound puppies gambolling freely. Will Mr. Sclater, of the Regent's Park—who knows more about feræ than most people—explain why so very few, if any, have succeeded in inducing tame foxes to breed, or why they will not eat a blackbird if offered to them? At least, this latter was a piece of natural history I picked up in this southern journey, and may be only a local peculiarity.

Our next draw was Lissa Glen, where a brawling beck flows

under some high rocky banks well clothed with timber, thorns, and brambles, with a small bit of gorse on one side in addition. This stream buries itself in a limestone rock, and does not reappear, I am told, for a long distance; and in the suck and undertow caused by this rock a gentleman was drowned when bathing, as I was informed. The hounds spoke to a fox here, but, whether the earths were open or not, all trace of him ceased directly. We next trotted on past a large house of Mr. Evans's, who is a master of harriers (this country is really a perfect Devonshire for hounds), and facing some brown heathy mountains, and leaving an old ruined castle known as Castle Pook to our left, we halt at a very fine 20-acre gorse, flanked by a fir wood, just under this line of hills and mountains. Suspense is not of long duration here, for the wood is thrilling with the notes of fifty hounds, all eager to proclaim their *trouvaille*, and the fact that scent has never, perhaps, been so high in covert the whole season. Those who hold that a racing pack must needs be a silent pack should have heard the crash which made the big gorse resonant from end to end. Presently a fine fox emerges towards the hills; but a rustic posted on a pillar like St. Simon Stylites is unable to smother his exultation, breaks out into shouts of joy, and the fox turns back. More hunting through the gorse succeeds; then four couple of hounds emerge on the far side, and Mr. Oliver rattles away with them; John Walsh brings on the remaining twenty-one. The field follow on in a straggling way, crossing two or three brooks *en route*, when, after going about a mile, or perhaps more, they find the fox has gone to ground in an earth which should have been closed—Donybrook is the place's name—but was strangely open; why, I cannot pretend to conjecture, but it *was* the subject of comment. The day had now brightened up a bit, and the lights and shadows on hill and plain and moorland were changing momentarily. It was a pleasant variation after the incessant drip of the fore and after noon, when

The patter on my hunting hat was all the sound I heard;

but there was nothing, I learnt, of much promise remaining for an evening draw, so we went on to Brough Wood without any very sanguine expectations (Lord Doneraile had been obliged to forego trying two or three coverts owing to recent deaths or illnesses).

This is a square piece of wood on a peaty and sandy soil, where innumerable rhododendrous flourish luxuriantly. We had nearly finished exploring it when three or four hounds owned a line. "Heel," say the authorities; so we turn the pack the reverse way. These hounds were right, however, and in a few minutes we are following them as they stream along over the country, cross two roads and one brook, and send their fox into Old Town. Here he was not allowed to tarry—no, not for an instant; so, crossing another road (I believe the Buttevant Road), he got down to the Boubilee spinney on the Awbeg, whence he was soon ejected, and then his course lay for some time along the banks of the river (up stream), where he veered to the right, meaning to go towards Knockanarea, 'tis supposed. In the latter part of his journey he was not much pressed, so he turned back to Boubilee, ran much up and down the river banks, made excursions into the Old Court cemetery, where the many head-stones failed to help him, for twenty-five couple of hounds were ravening for him with their bristles up. Forced from this refuge, he again crossed the road, and, seeing a small hole in the bottom of the stone arch of a bridge over the Oghern (a tributary of the Awbeg's), he jumped into it as into a safe retreat, *more Harlequino*, only a moment or two in front of the pack. We, the field, are on the road, or rather on the crown of the bridge, overlooking proceedings. The brook is in spate and very turbid. Presently the hounds come to the banks, and a good many couple plunge in. On a bad-scenting day it is not improbable that the pack might have raced by the bridge. They would probably then have been cast forwards in the fields beyond, with the idea that the fox had gone into the brook to kill scent, and so one fox

more would have been alive in the evening. To-day the graveolent, game animal had not a chance. There they are marking the spot, the fatal spot, with deadly precision, and looking as if they would pull down the bridge with their teeth if they could not get at him. The hole of refuge was shallow, and not more than three feet or four from the ground. For a few minutes they swarm and clamour and cry for their prey, then several jump up, and one (I ought not to forget her name, but I do) pulls him into mid-stream. A worry-worry in the brook ensues; with difficulty is some of the carcass extricated from among them, and the more formal obsequies are gone through on the bank. The day's sport, moderate enough, receives a good crown, and all go home, I fancy much pleased, to dry clothes and creature comforts. Let me here pay the the tribute of a passing paragraph (an internal sigh on my own part at having to leave them accompanies it) to a very perfect pack of hounds, admirably handled by John Walsh, whose praise is in all the parishes, and to the condition in which Lynch, his lordship's stud groom, turned out his horses.

Meath has not kept up to its high standard during the last few days, nor has there been anything so good or decided as the sport of the 24th, when they met at Tankardstown. The 28th was enjoyed by those who were well enough mounted to get over a very big country. They met at Newhaggart, and, finding a fox at Moneymore, took him through Knightsbrook and Rock Lodge to Belmount, where he got into a drain near the house; the line was good, but large of obstacle, and the pace was also very fast. They had a second run from Trimleston to near Trim. On the 27th they were at Drewstown, and had a ring *viâ* Killeen, ending in a kill, and a smart gallop from Gillstown to Drewstown. On the 28th they were at Culmullen, and so lucky a spot has this been as a point of departure for stag or fox this season, that many horses were sent on for its first draw, even from long distances. The result did not equal anticipations. A

ringing fox killed, a run from Dunsany marred by the intervention of a railway, and an uninteresting pursuit from Killeen to Dunsany *viâ* Lismullen, was the outcome of a day of great expectations. On the 29th Archerstown was their meet, another drawing, and deservedly drawing, fixture; but it produced nothing better or worse than a fox killed in Kilgar Gorse, a bad run from Lakefield, and a ring from Clonabraney towards Ballinlough.

Lord Waterford has followed up the week of which I sent you the opening chapter. On the 18th his hounds met at Garden Morris, Mr. and Lady Gwendoline O'Shea's residence, always a popular and well-attended fixture. Finding at Carrigan, they never gave their fox a chance till they pulled him down in the open near Carrickamore, after a fine run of 1 hour 15 minutes. On the 20th they met at Ballyglen, and a small field had the satisfaction of another very fast gallop, and nearly straight from the covert where they met, to the cliffs near Dunmore, a fashionable bathing-place on that coast. On the 21st they were at Mount Neil, and a fine hunting run of more than two hours was marred of its crown by a train which was approaching, and caused the hounds to be stopped. On the 25th they raced a fox from Ballydare to Kilmacthomas, and through the gorse till he got to ground at Kilmoylan; from Ballyneal in the evening they had a good hunting run of 1 hour 40 minutes, ending in a kill in the open. On the 27th they were at Kilcash Castle, and found in 'Early's Gorse,' a covert presented by Lord Clonmel to the Curraghmore hunt, and which, like the smaller one at Bishopscourt, always holds a good fox. For twenty-four minutes they chivied him into Wilmer, and prevented his dwelling there, forcing him on to Cregghouse, then through Lord Clonmel's Wood, as if pointing for Nine Mile House; but a turn to the right brought him to Newtown, where a leash of foxes were on foot; 45 minutes from Wilmer. On the 28th they ran for 1 hour 45 minutes

from Carrick-a-Tubber till they killed their fox in a brake of gorse near Corbally: a fortnight of uninterruptedly fine sport.

I hear Kilkenny Club-house is to be filled next year by Saxon sportsmen, who vow that the foxes and scenting grounds of Kilkenny cannot be matched on the far side of the dividing ditch, now so well bridged over. On the 24th this pack met at Kilfane cross-roads a very large circle of pursuers. Finding at Bishop's Lough at once (a covert famous this year for two very good runs), they sent their fox out towards Clifden Bottoms; but at the Gowran Road he turned to the right, by the old Castle of Ballynabola, and made Mr. Doyle's farm. Here a sharp race received its first check. 'Jack,' however, soon hit him off, when the line led by Blancheville and Gowran railway station into Flagmount, where he got to ground—a fine hunting run of about seven miles. Gowran Park sent out a rare fast fox, who beat off an entire field (with some five or six exceptions), including a hard-riding lady, making Bishop's Lough in 25 minutes. On Monday, the 31st, they met at Gowran, and, after a blank draw or two, found in Castle Warren a bold fox, who, though turned back more than once by foot-people, broke away, leaving Shankhill to the right, over a good but holding line, in a fog which made it very necessary to stick as much as possible to the pack. The fox was heading for Mr. Rochfort's coverts at Clogrennan; but he was too much exhausted to hold on for that point, so he turned into Old Leighlin, and got to ground just in front of the pack; the time was made 1 hour 15 minutes. Among others who saw this run was Mr. Watson, the master of the Carlow and Island hounds, at the head of a good many of his own hunt. The latter had a very enjoyable day last Saturday, when they met at Burton Hall. Their first fox they found at Graney, and ran him very fast towards Corbally; but a turn brought him to Castle Dermot covert, where he got to ground after a

sharp pursuit of three miles or thereabouts. They took a second from Rathdaniel to the banks of the Slaney, near Rathmore, at best pace, and about as fast back again, where he got to ground; bolted from this refuge, he ran a ring, and was, I believe, killed.

The Kildare hounds have done nothing notable since the Friday's run which I sent you. On the following Saturday they drew Larah blank, but Ballycaghan abounded in foxes; one they took after much covert rattling at great pace to Cappagh, though not exactly by the usual route; a fresh fox, as I hear, broke from the latter gorse, and the hounds slipped away with him towards Ryndville, and thence to Ballycaghan, where they killed him. Hortland was next drawn. For once it failed to show good sport, for the fox, instead of making for Donadea, turned bogwards, after a bit of a circle, in which he managed to engulf one or two of his enemies, one of them a distinguished soldier—a V.C. and a great shekarry—and it ended in the hounds sailing away over the moss by themselves. The following Monday (the 31st) was even more disastrous. The meet was at Millicent. Landenstown proved blank; Bella Villa Gorse held, but its fox got chopped, and a very short excursion from Osberstown wound up a bad day.

On the 2nd they were at Rathcoole, and did nothing till they came to Johnstown Kennedy, whence they had a lively gallop *viâ* Athgoe, over the high wall of Lyons, built, like the great wall of China, to exclude outer barbarians in the shape of foxes from the park there (in the best interests of hunting), and, I believe, to Cullen's Wood. A good grey fox found at Boston Gorse—Lord Cloncurry's covert, drawn with good effect seventeen times in succession—took them at express pace, first in the direction of Lyons, when he wheeled, and, running over the red-coat racecourse in a line parallel to the Grand Canal, he won his way, after some three miles of steeplechasing, to the sewer of Baron Rath, which he tried, but found sealed. Here Will

Freeman, who had got well in front, and stayed there all through, viewed him as he turned away to the left off the Straffan Road, over the big fields which lead up to Mr. Mills's residence. The Morill brook crossed, he was now pointing for the *débris* of Turnings covert; but it was a race for life, as the pack were close to him, and, seeing a sewer or drain open by the Straffan Road, he plunged into it, and was lost to the hounds, though they had earned their fox cutlets well. Every one I spoke to concurs in calling this twenty-five minutes about the fastest, if not absolutely *the* fastest, thing of the Kildare season. The line was beautiful, though it was divided by a few large fences, and the fox ran in the teeth of a strong breeze, and was never far before his pursuers. Messrs. Lawless, Blacker, R. Mansfield, R. Kennedy, Robertson, Gough, Percy La Touche, Rose, Lord Cloncurry, and a few more saw it well, I believe. Grief to horses followed inevitably, and Vestris, one of the hounds, was severely cut.

In Louth sport has been extremely good during the past fortnight, witness the following excerpts from their diary: On the 26th they were at Gormanstown, found there, and had a very sharp circle by Lowther's Lodge, ending in a kill. Time, 40 minutes. They next ran into a mangy fox found at Stedall, then found at Mallahone, and had a very fast ring by Ashbourne over a good line. Then they ran a road for a mile, when the fox turned into Westown, and was pulled down in the open after one hour and fifteen minutes. On the 29th they were at Callan, finding three foxes at once; one they killed in the White River, a second they rattled round the demesne, and sent him out into the open by Knocklena, Ashville, and Drakestown, back to Ashville, where he got to ground in a short sewer under a gateway; but, seeing he had stood up for one hour and ten minutes, Mr. Filgate would not allow him to be bolted. A short gallop from Harristown wound up a most successful day.

I know no more spectacular rendezvous than Woodlands, Lord Annaly's picturesque residence, overlooking the broad reaches of the sinuous Liffey, which was coloured on the Meath card for Friday, the 4th inst. To one living in "the pale" the choice of hunting grounds to-day lay between the wilder and remoter Bolton Hill, on the extreme verge of the Kildare territory, and this Woodlands assembly, which I propose to notice briefly now. Needless to say that, to the vast majority of pursuers, Woodlands commended itself as immeasurably preferable. To begin with, a visit to Bolton Hill involves much railway work, and at least one night out, supposing all goes well. In these railway days a fixture must have some special magnetic influence to induce men with ordinary hunting theories to sacrifice a considerable portion of two days to visit it. The metropolitan meet, on the other hand, warranted several extra hours in bed, and no serious dislocation of those social arrangements and systems in which so many men, and such a preponderating majority of the charmingest women, live, move, and have their being. And just now Dublin is having one of those fitful little seasons much welcomed by female Erin, and still more by Dublin *modistes*, milliners, and celebrities in the *mundus muliebris*, signalled by the opening of viceregal portals to admit the loyal, the brave, the wise, and the fair—in a word, there has been a levée and drawing-room at Dublin Castle, while balls have followed in their wake; and, as the present *régime* is eminently popular, especially among the hunting classes of Ireland, Dublin is choke full and necessarily so is a fashionable meet within ten miles. *Figurez-vous donc*, gentle reader, what an aggregation of hunting mortality there must be when the tryst is hardly five miles distant, in a beautiful park accessible by two long routes; the lower one which brings you by the banks of the Liffey, with the famed strawberry beds sloping down gracefully on your right hand (this is the Rhinegais of Ireland); the upper one leading you through the dear old Phœnix Park (incomparably superior to Prater, Prado, Bois, Central

Green, Regent's, or Hyde Parks) by Farmly, and a succession of villas till you enter the ivied gateway of Woodlands. In the fine park-like grounds which open to your ken all around, the grand democracy of hunting finds ample scope and the widest of arenas. Dublin militant is here represented in every possible arm—Guards, line, cavalry, artillery, staff, and "Intelligence" (whatever that may mean). It is also a very Trades Union; for the merchant princes, and the merchants who are not princes but fond of hunting, are here to a man, and to a woman also. Among the professionals there is a well-mounted doctor, who will bind up your wounds, maybe give you another horse, if you and yours have come to unutterable grief; there is a cunning man of law, who is also very cunning of country and woodcraft, who will give you the best and most practical of advice—a good lead—if you are able to follow him. An eminent engineer (whose praise is in India), who dons silk and satin in spring and summer, was unfortunately absent (though living close), from a recent very severe fall. Dublin, Meath, Westmeath, and Kildare pursuers are fraternising and comparing notes. The ranks of lady pursuers are thinner than might be anticipated; but, if not numerous, be sure Mrs. Hume, Mrs. Benson, and Miss Morrin will be pretty near the hounds, if they fancy the country mean riding and get off well. Mrs. Nugent is riding uuder difficulties, for her arm is still in splints; Miss Irwin rides a very neat grey horse; Mrs. Morrogh eschews crowds and prefers furs and a waggonette to-day—perhaps wisely, for the day, though bright and translucently clear, is bitterly cold and cutting. But the Woodlands foxes have not awaited the inevitable stampede, of which they may have had warning in ringing horsehoofs for the last hour; so the long train of cars, carriages, and horsemen is set in motion, and halts at last *vis-à-vis* to Hollywood Rath, whence they had a short gallop about a month, or rather more, ago. There is no fox on the premises here to-day, so on we go to Ballymacarney, the starting point of a very fine gallop which I noticed in your columns a few weeks back. The

fox breaks over the old line; hurrah! Harden your heart and tighten your girths, for over these wide reaches of old turf, and big banks and ditches, the fox will fly, knowing scent will be all against him; but, confound it, he is back in the gorse! we see not the cause. Again he emerges in an opposite direction, the line leading direct to a brook, which a few jump, while one sable pursuer (not a nigger—I only mean clothes) has had his baptism of water already, and looks as if the baptism of a kitchen fire would be a good sequel); but the fox doesn't mean going this way, so he lopes back, and gets out where he was first balked. For a couple of miles it is a nice gallop over the old good line, the country flat as a pancake, the fields large and all grass. Few have got off really well, or on good terms with the hounds. Near a plantation overlooked by the little hills of Kilbride, there is a short check, and then on goes the chase again, gaily and merrily, as a road is crossed, a cemetery passed; and now some six or seven alone are really with the hounds as they fly over a brook and through the first bit of plough we have met yet. I believe among this division are Lord Langford, Mr. Trotter, Mr. Kearsley; I think, but am not quite sure, Mr. Hare also. Soon after follows Mr. Allan M'Donough, on a hunting-looking bay horse, full of go, who carries him well over the brook. But the fox has turned back, recrossed the brook, run under Kilbride Hill, and made his way all through the Priesttown fields (their hard-riding owner is meantime exchanging dripping for dry clothes), then circled back towards Hollywood Rath, winding his way eventually, I believe, to Ballymacarney Gorse. Part of this run was very animating, the rest most uninteresting. Casualties—the direst of which was sustained by the head of a coach-making firm, who was kicked severely in the eye when down—abounded; one master of hounds got down twice. The M.F.H. of Meath was well-nigh disabled by a kicking horse. Let me here tender my thanks to a gentleman (Mr. Bellamy) who, finding me horseless, mounted me *en bon Samaritan*, not on his ass, but on a right good hunter—a *bel et bon ami* he proved.

The Kildare Hounds at Bolton Hill had a very short run from Hobartstown; secondly, a very long excursion from Sheriff's Hill to ground; thirdly, a very fair but most twisting forty minutes from Matt Conran's Gorse, by Ballynure to the Grange, thence towards Tynte Park, the remainder I believe mainly retrogressive, part very fast indeed. Those who journeyed from Naas and Rathcoole on Wednesday saw a triumphal arch erected near Kill in honour of the nuptials of a lady well known in the Kildare hunting field and a doctor, whose light hands are as much at home with snaffle and bridoon as in counting the pulsations on a patient's wrist. But the week has been sadly clouded by the sudden and premature death of a very promising officer of the 4th Dragoon Guards, Mr. Dowdeswell, who had made his mark most successfully in the Kildare hunting grounds, and was much liked everywhere.

A hard-riding farmer told me of an extraordinary good gallop which he enjoyed last week with the Newbridge harriers, when they met at Miltown, and took their hare for nearly a brace of miles across the Curragh, at best galloping pace, and hunted her up and down for seven or eight more, till they fairly wore her down.

Blessington, known in old times as Burgage, was the scene of operations in the Kildare fox campaign on Saturday, the 5th inst. The morning was rimy, and indeed two days' consecutive frost had produced some thickish ice, and had curdled up everything in the shape of mud and slush to the consistency of a petrifaction. The wheel tracks as you hacked to the meet were slippery enough, otherwise the roads were in good order, and, as there was not much plough where we were going, the croakers and alarmists had little to fear or grumble about in the shape of bruised fetlocks and heels. By eleven a warm sun came out, though all day long the freezing processes were actively carried on in the shade. The village itself has a neat, thriving air about it, and all traces of the horrors of 1798 have completely vanished, till you come to the

ruins of Lord Downshire's house, which, if tradition lie not, was built by Primate Boyle, the last ecclesiastical chancellor of Ireland. A gateway of fine spacious proportions leads into the deer park, in the corner of which is the gorse proper, now in the state of Bob Sawyer's beard when he was not receiving visitors. Outside the deer park there are one or two wooded glens which often hold a fox; to-day they were empty. Inside the park are many snug-lying spots much affected by foxes, and out of one of them an outlier fox jumped up, and took the field along at a good pace to the fox covert, up to the top of the hill which overlooks it, and then up and down a series of steep pitches, which left the heavy men a very long distance astern. His course is now along the table land which surmounts the high ridge whence the Blessington valley and the great Kildare and Meath vales may be surveyed, though he rather hugged the Blessington side. It is galloping turf, light as the Wiltshire downs stretching away for many miles. An odd ravine or two has to be crossed, and some ugly banks, furze-grown, also intervene. The race, for it is a race, is to the swift to-day, and not to the ponderous. Two light weights, Mr. W. Kennedy and Mr. Gough, have won the position of next to the hounds, though at a long interval. Major Lawless, Mr. Sweetman, Capt. Lee, Mr. F. Tynte, and one or two more, head the next batch. As for the *polloi*, they are a beaten and discomfited array, struggling as well as they can with panting, puffing, sobbing hunters to nurse into position. At Tinode occurs a wooded glen; into this the hounds plunged after the fox, who turned to the right by Mr. Cogan's house, and won his way to an earth somewhat strangely left open and gaping, into which foxes have often run before. The two leaders, meanwhile, had "flashed" over the pack, and did not know for some minutes what had fortuned. A luncheon, to which all seemed bidden, at Mr. Cogan's residence, Tinode, was the next interlude. After that a trot to Eadestown Gorse, a very quick find, the fox pointing for Punchestown, then turning hillwards, crossing the Ballymore road,

and running up to Athgarrett Hill, when he crossed another road near Mr. Byrne's farm homestead. On then gaily for a few fields till a bit of plough causes a check. On the grass the thread is resumed, another road passed by, and then a very fast scurry over some light hilly turf for about a mile or more, till Rathmore village is left behind, and after twenty minutes or more of slow hunting the fox is found to have gone to ground in the earths at Arthurstown Gorse, which is now sprouting up fast.

Among the minor casualties of the week or fortnight was a fall sustained by Mr. W. Forbes, of Forenaghts, which has unfortunately made him an absentee from the ranks of pursuit for some days.

A malignant-looking frost seems to be in the ascendant just now, and the western sky looked ominously red and yellow, or rather maizy, as we rode home in the evening. *Absit omen!*

The brilliant runs with the Ward Union hounds last week have, if I mistake not, been already transferred to your columns; a very good hunter succumbed to the killing distance of Monday's pursuit. Wednesday's, though not so sensational, was perhaps more generally enjoyed by the select field who came out that day. Mr. Cosby's sport during the past week has not been up to his average level, so an abstract and brief chronicle must suffice. On Monday last they found a positive plethora of foxes at Harristown, but, between the numbers and the gale which was bowling along, a good rattling was nearly all that was effected.

The best thing on Thursday was a very fast twelve minutes from Sling to the old covert of Cullenagh, while on Saturday they had a long hunting run, with fast occasional bits, from Killone up to Sheffield, when their fox turned, and eventually got to ground near Stradbally—2 hours 25 minutes in all.

On Monday, the 7th, the Kildare hounds essayed to hunt for a couple of hours or so, but were driven home by a blinding snowstorm from Rusboro', Lord Miltown's park.

I regret to be obliged to postpone, for want of space, records of sport in Galway, Louth, Meath, and Cork.

February 19th, 1876.

"The course of true love never did run smooth," says one of Shakespeare's heroines. Foxhunters may apply the "wise saw" to their own case. "A modern instance" occurs no later than Monday, the 7th, on which date I propose to commence my hebdomadal history of pursuit in this island. The Kildare hounds were due at Ballymore Eustace on that day, and the debt of attendance was paid by the dog pack, who were incontinently trotted up the hill, past the village church and schoolhouse, where such a fluttering took place a few weeks back, as fox, hounds, and followers swept by both in the wildest tumult of rapid pursuit, and so on to the gates of Bishop's Land, a small picturesque park, that can lay claim to the possession of one side of the Poula-Phouca waterfall—the Niagara of this part of the world, and, like that almighty water privilege, rejoicing in a Clifton House of its own, where much dining and dancing are annually done in the leafy months, to the sonorous accompaniment of the tumultuous rush of waters. It is a place somewhat dreaded by huntsmen and masters of hounds, as the rocky sides of the glen through which the torrent bounds and foams are very precipitous in places, and hounds occasionally overbalance themselves in the ardour of pursuit, and topple over into the swirling abysses many feet below them. Bishop's Land was foxless to-day, as well as the neighbouring gorsy ravines. So the small cavalcade, including that veteran pursuer, Sir James Higginson, whom no weather can daunt, was set in motion—Excelsior—towards Russboro', Lord Miltown's park, overlooking a pleasant reach of the river Liffey, here a very young stream, and fresh from its parent mountains above us. The preservation of foxes must be very carefully attended to at Russboro' (for I have seen several runs from it), seeing that the woods are about as hollow and devoid of fox lying, except in a few spots, as the Kensington Palace woods—to go far afield for a popular

simile. To-day they were explored in vain, without trace or symptom of a drag, when some black cloud, which had been gradually obscuring a brilliantly fine though cold morning, burst forth into one of the most pungently pitiless snow and hail storms—

Commixta grandine nimbus—

which I can recollect in these temperate latitudes. Hunting ceased to be possible, so a general dispersion took place. I said "hail storm"; in reality it was a fine sharp snow dust driven into your eyes, and very hard for man or horse to face. In an hour afterwards the temperature was infinitely milder, and the effects of the last two days' freezing processes were much mitigated; by dark, however, snow covered everything within the horizon with its now too familiar white surcoat.

On Tuesday the outlook was most Siberian; the Wicklow Hills, among which Lugnacuilla has a proud pre-eminence, were hoary with deep snow, while the foreground was also a white mass, with green peeping through. It was, however, dissolving hourly, and the snow fall had taken out of the soil much of the bone which rendered hunting in some places yesterday a somewhat perilous business. The Kildare hounds met at Brannoxtown village, selecting for their *point de mire* a spot opposite the artistic lodge and gateway of Harristown, where three gentlemen's demesne lands are bounded by the Dunlavin Road, Major Borrowes, Mr. Latouche, and Mr. Cramer Roberts, being the respective proprietors of Giltown, Harristown, and Sallymount. The village itself is an eminently neat one, the cottages well kept, and the gardens and plots in front of them managed with care and taste—mute evidences of a landlord who, like the Shunamite woman, "lives among his own people." For Sir Wilfrid Lawson's information, I may mention that there is no public-house within view or hail, while the yews and other shrubs opposite the post-office are cut into fantastic shapes of

foxes, pea fowl, etc., in a style which would not descredit Kew or Hampton Court.

The meet was a very large one, and quite a cohort of ladies did honour to the pretty surroundings, Mr. and the Hon. Mrs. Netterville adding a party of visitors from Louth and Meath to the already well-filled ranks of lady pursuers.

Bump! bump! bump! we are trotting along the Dunlavin Road for nearly four miles, till we turn to the right and enter the grass lands of Logatrina, where Mr. and Mrs. Allen keep a vigilant eye to the well-being of the foxes, brought out there, for there is a very scanty modicum of covert for them on the premises. The hounds had drawn or run through the usual haunts, when up jumps a fox in front of them, and with a blazing scent they settle to him without the loss of a second, hunting him over those wide pastures where galloping *does* come into play, past the Bowery Gorse, over the Dunlavin Road, and on apparently to Ballintaggart Gorse. There is a valley here, watered by a sluggish brook, naturally defended by somewhat marshy approaches, and fortified moreover by a barricade of wire. Those who rode parallel to this stream were out of the running *pro tem.*, and had to retrace their steps, but a point of reunion was soon gained at Hatfield Gorse, where there was a long pause. Extruded from this refuge, our fox now ran a rather zigzag course to Ballintaggart, during which he appeared at one time pointing for Black Rath, peradventure *en route* to Narraghmore, or it may be to Martinstown. The delay at Ballintaggart Gorse was but of a few moments. Two foxes were viewed away from it, and it would be very hard to say whether the bitches stuck to their own fox or wavered in their allegiance. Let us hope they did not change quarries; at any rate, we are toiling on after them as hard as we can, jumping a succession of small fences, till in a gap we encounter a rustic who had strong views as to the rights and wrongs of property, and seemed to have the courage of his opinions too, for in his right

hand he brandished a big stone, with which he menaced all comers. In justice to his exasperation, let me state that the line led directly over a piece of newly laid-down rye grass and clover, which is certainly liable to much injury if trampled under horse-hoof, and he was probably a very small holder of land. Our course is now over a succession of very large banks, with a ditch generally on the far side to-day, and over these we were led by Mr. W. Kennedy and Mr. Percy La Touche, while Miss Kilbee and Mr. Fortescue Tynte, with Will Freeman to the left, were close up. At Hatfield we come to a short check; then pushed out, our fox leads us through the Bowery Gorse on to Logatrina, thence to Grangebeg, under or very close to the bridge which marks the boundary, I believe, between the counties of Kildare and Wicklow, and then across the Naas Road, with Tober ruins well on the right, as if he intended to push on to Cryhelp, or it may be to the Scalp Mountain. The course is now over light, sound grass upland; but it does not carry the scent of the vale, and catchily and fitfully the bitches hunt their fox, who must have had a good start, as there was a check of five or ten minutes in the neighbourhood of the bridge I referred to. However, they would probably have accounted for him in some way satisfactory to themselves, had not the balling snow prevented any further riding in this direction; so pursuit was arrested at a large pond in an old walled-in deer park, which seemed to be well covered with teal and widgeon. I believe the time of this fine hunting run was somewhere about two hours and a half from the find at Logatrina. The early part was so fast that those who began badly, were late, or were stopped by a fall or other mischance, never had an opportunity of regaining their losses till the check at Hatfield; the wide pasture fields were full of galloping pursuers, from half a mile to a mile in rear of the hounds—*nec diræ toties arsere cometæ*, for indeed the tail would not have discredited a comet of the first rank. The second bit from Ballintaggart and Hatfield, and thence on to Logatrina, was

also fast enough to please most men. If we hunted *one* fox all the time, he must be a rare stout one, and will, I trust, survive to sire a new generation gifted with his staying quality and capacity. There were some few casualties, but none serious: a horse was cut rather severely at a wall, and Mr. Knox (R.H.A.) and the Hon. C. Bourke—well-mounted men generally—had some lessons in practical geology.

For the information of readers who may never have hunted in this part of Ireland, I may mention that the country of our first run—which, though by no means straight (in fact, nearly a case of there and back again), covered some six or seven miles in extreme points—was a very fair specimen of an Irish hunting country. High sound table-land, almost uninterrupted grass, and much of it pasture unscathed by plough within a far longer period than living memory can reach, and utterly bare of tree or hedgerow, save in a few spots where a few poles would not detain a sinking fox for an instant; where can you see a wider or better area for a fox chase? There are hills, 'tis true; but they are not the steep pitches such as I described the other day at "the Downshire," where no man much over 11 stone has a chance of living with hounds when they are really stretched. The fields are in places smaller than a great slawming Leicestershire horse would covet, but then they are nearly altogether free from ridge-and-furrow; and if the fences are most recurrent and more rugged and irregular than one would choose oneself, they are generally sound on top, and not so abominably narrow as in some countries. A bold, clever, handy horse was quite at home among them, and indeed there are few lines in Ireland where a wild, rushing, wide-jumping horse can be ridden with either safety or pleasure; it requires some nerve and skill to control such ambitious quadrupeds even in England.

The next stage was at Giltown Gorse—a very quick find and speedy *exitus;* some slow chequered hunting up to the Yellow Bogchurch, thence across mixed grass and plough to a point

near Kilcullen village. At a long check near Mile Mill I made my bow to them, for the wind was from the regions of frost, and pursuit had ceased to be animating or warming to man or horse; I heard since that they marked him to ground on the far side of the Liffey. With snow whitening the fields, and clouds full of either more snow or rain, it is a good time to glance retrospectively at our neighbours' doings in the hunting field. Let me commence with a week of really high-class sport in Galway. On the 25th ult., after some ringing round Castle Taylor with a bad fox, they found an outlier or traveller at some distance, who took them at great pace through Cargin and Rahasane, across the high-road, and over a fine grass line into Castle Taylor, thence out again into the open, when he got to ground, after a capital fifty minutes. It was in this run that the accident I alluded to last week happened to Mr. F. Joyce. His hunter caught the *coping stone* of the demesne wall of Rahasane, was killed at once, and his owner was of course much crushed, though progressing most favourably.

On the 27th, in the Tuam country, Gallagh produced a fox at once, who was killed in covert. From Lakefield a second ran to Gallagh. Kilclooney furnished a third, who took the hounds along at great pace over a stiff bank-and-ditch line for forty minutes, when they rolled him over.

On the 29th they were at Dalyston, a fine park, with miles of wooded background; here there was plenty of hard work for men and horses. In the afternoon they found a good fox in Carra Gorse, who led them over a grass country, heavy going in places, past Dartfield, Wallscourt, and Doone, to Eastwell, where he got to ground at the back of the house; a fine run of one hour and five minutes, only interrupted by two short checks.

On the next Thursday they were in the Eyre Court country, and had the misfortune to kill a fox in Mr. Pollock's new gorse. Another did not turn up till late, and he was a twister, and got

to ground soon. Mr. Burton Persse got a severe fall in the course of it.

On the 5th they were at Eastwell, found there, and lost their first fox by careless earth-stopping. Three or four good coverts next tried made no sign; but Carra, now celebrated, and justly so, for its straight foxes, sent out a good one, who took a new line over the lightest of grass; and the pace was admirable, till some cattle crossed the line and caused a momentary check. Twenty minutes up to this point. Then follows another twenty of brilliant galloping, till this good fox gets to ground just in front of the pack. It is and must be a source of mingled satisfaction and regret to Mr. Burton Persse when a fox of this stamp escapes. The pack had earned him well; but, on the other hand, it must be recollected that he is carrying on hunting in a country where, I grieve to say, the great territoral magnates, or at any rate some of them, are not only lukewarm in the cause of fox preservation, but through their agents and *employés* are positive vulpecides—killers of foxes and maimers of foxes; for 'tis not in the metropolitan counties only that *tripod* foxes crop up painfully often.

This is not encouraging to a master who kept a pack of hounds going in his native county during the dreary years of despair and despondency, and brought them to a pitch of excellence of which his countrymen ought to be really proud, That his efforts *are* appreciated by the majority is a patent fact—it were strange if they were not; but those whom he ought to count upon as his chief supporters, if merely from the spirit of *county* patriotism, supposing that they cared not one jot personally for hunting, are hardly to be called *even neutral.* Galway has a moderate harbour, and some bathing advantages; it rears healthy sheep and good store cattle; as a hunting country it might take high rank, and gain all the social and financial advantages which hunting ever brings in its train. Are not such considerations, *to rich men,* superior to the sale of a few hundred pairs of rabbits annually?

In Cork—at least in the United Hunt country—sport flourishes amain. I limit my narrative to a single day, the 4th inst., when they met at Pigeon Hill, and, finding at once, sent their fox out at best pace toward's Wakehame's Glen, through it on to Carrigtwohill Rock, where the hounds rolled over their fox. He had been accompanied all the way by a partner, and the pack, catching sight of the second fox, ran him down directly! This was an extremely fast gallop of about four miles, and well seen by Lord Fermoy, the Hon. A. Roche, the whip J. Wallis, and one or two more. A lot of men who were a few minutes late at the meet lost the whole thing, so quick was the find and finish. Bolton's covert produced a second fox, who rang round Knockeen and Bolton's plantations, then started off for Devonshire's Brake, on to Racabane, when he made a wide bend to the south, then tried the earths at Cardigan, and, finding them closed, held on for Ballyvolane and the mountain coverts. At the first check the master stopped the hounds. They had run, I hear, so far that those who had done both gallops could not want more. Among the foremost were Mr. G. Montgomery, Mr. T. Coppinger, and Mr. Morgan Smith.

In Louth the tale of sport, if not so brilliant as the last I sent your columns, is far from moderate. Beginning with the current month—

On the 1st, at Hilltown, foxes were numerous, and distracted the pack, but presently they settled to one who went away for Duleek, sank the hill, and, turning suddenly, threw many out. Passing Beaumont and Lisdornan, he went through Silverstream and got to ground at Mullatela Hill, after a capital thirty-five minutes, seen but by a select minority, among whom were Messrs. Jameson, Trotter, Kearsley, S. Garnet, C. Rothwell, and Hare. In Dardistown they found a good fox, who took them by Rockweller, Cooper Hill, Crafty Wood, and Kilsharven, getting to ground in a rabbit burrow at Mount Hanover, an hour in all. On the 4th they chopped a fox in the Laurels at Stephenstown,

and took another across the Fane, through Corderry, towards Corbalis and back to Corderry, where he got to ground; an hour's run. They next had a ring from Bragganstown *viâ* Drumcashell, the fox getting to ground. Till 5.30 P.M. they hunted round Bragganstown, putting no less than two brace to ground in different burrows.

The run of the season, however, in Louth took place on Monday, the 7th inst.; it occupied two hours and thirty minutes, covered eight miles from point to point, and the distance ran over by hounds and horses cannot have been much less than a score of miles. They met on this day at Mullen's Cross, found a bad fox at Charleville, who broke for Bragganstown, but inclining to the right made for Bolus, where he tried to scrape his way into an earth, failed, and was killed.

The next turned up at Drumcar, and took the pack along by Cortown very nearly as far as Dunleer; thence by Gallagh into Barmeath, where he crossed the park, and ran by the Grange and Rathdrummine to the railway, which he made his track for a mile, till he turned by Carrickbagget, leaving Rokeby to the right, on by the back of Dunshallow into Piperstown, crossing in his course some nasty sharp walls, including the Piperstown boundary. In Carterstown he found a patch of gorse, where he lay down for a bit, and thus let the hounds get dangerously near. From this he passed on by the chapel of Fieldstown, by Tullyesker Hill, and under the old ruins of Monasterboice, leaving Collon on one side, through Tymullen, and then leftwards till he touched the upper plantations of Monasterboice House. Forced out of them, he broke on the Townly Hall side, and was rolled over in the second field. In six days this pack has killed nine foxes (eight in the open) and run nine to ground, without really losing a single fox.

The Meath hounds on the 3rd killed a fox at Philpotstown after a short gallop. From Churchtown they had a sharp run by Boyerstown and Ardbraccan to the river Blackwater, which the

fox crossed. The hounds, of course, followed; a certain number of ardent pursuers also swam it, but were rewarded by seeing their fox marked to ground near the far bank. The Kileen gallop in the evening of the Woodlands meet was a capital forty-three minutes, very fast, and over such a line as the Fairy House and Harberstown names will suggest to many readers.

On the 5th they met at Crossakeil, and had a good gallop from Mr. Battersby's never-failing covert, Boltown, by Drewstown, Rockfield, and Balrath.

On Thursday the Kildare hounds were prevented from exploring their Athy coverts by several inches of snow top-dressing the fields as far as the eye could reach. On the previous Monday the Ward Union hounds went down to Drumree, and enlarged their stag at Culmullen. Needless to say that much would be, and was, anticipated from these two names, but the result showed that even staghunting cannot be reduced to an equation, and that scent represents the unknown *x*. It was not brilliant, and a ring *viâ* Dunsany, and a very moderate pursuit up to Larch Hill (the line beautiful), covering 1 hour 20 minutes, was the sole result.

Among the memorabilia of hunting during this chequered season I know of no run that surpasses the following with Mr. Watson's hounds (the Carlow and Island), in its varied features and sustained interest. The date was Tuesday, the 8th instant, which will henceforth be a rubrical day in the archives of this pack, and the meet was at Limerick, the most distant point in the Wexford portion of Mr. Watson's territory. The first fox was found in Shersheen Wood, the property of Mr. George Brooks, of whose bijou pack of harriers I have often written in your columns. He gave the field a capital forty minutes, beating the pack by getting to ground; it was not a straight gallop, but the pace was good, and every one enjoyed it greatly. The second draw was Hollyfort, where several foxes were on foot together. I should mention here that this covert is on Mr. Wyatt's property, a gentleman who

resides in England, but takes care that fox preservation on his estate is not a nominal mockery. It was 2.45 when the hounds fairly settled to one, and then they sent him along mountainwards towards Coolattin; for about two miles his course was a straight one, till he reached a place called Munniseed, where he turned sharp to the left, running by Crawford, his point apparently Shule Gorse; but he passed close by without entering it, raced by the boundary fence of the next covert also, Howell's Gorse, on to Ilebuoy, keeping along the right shoulder of the hill, without ascending, away over Ballycaddeen, leaving the Court of Donishall a little on his right, and keeping his line between Ballingate and Charlesfort, on by Kilrush chapel, and, with his mask set straight for. Newtownbarry, the hounds ran into him before he could reach its sheltering woods. The time was 2 hours 15 minutes, the distance fifteen miles from point to point (about twenty-two as hounds ran it); the pace was good all through, and rather increased the last half of the run, for the fox was never far in front of the pack, and was twice viewed during the pursuit. The hounds were only cast once, and on two occasions received some assistance as they were getting through flocks of mountain sheep. Those familiar with the country will perceive that this fox ran by the fences of no less than three gorses without entering them, while he passed near two others. He was a small dog fox, the hero of this chase. The line run over was, perhaps, the very best that could be selected in the entire hunting district—it was along a range of light dry hills that run from the river Slaney to the mountains nearly north and south, the fox being found in the covert furthest north, and running south. It was very favourable to horses, as there was no bad hill, no soft ground, no impracticable fence. The field at starting consisted of about thirty, and not a few persevered for ten miles, but the last five miles told its tale on all but an equal number of men and horses. Let me name the former, the master, Mr. T. Bunbury, Capts. Walker and Morton, and the first whip. The mere outline of this run tells its own tale. Let me add that a

hunting man, whose experience ranges over a singular number of fine runs, assured me that he considered this about the best he had ever seen or ridden.

It is also noteworthy that in the year 1826, exactly fifty years ago, Mr. Watson's father had a run from Ballingate to Hollyfort, which he continually alluded to as one of his finest pursuits; and, strange to say, no fox has ever been known to run between those points from that day to this. On that occasion the fox got to ground; on the present he was rolled over in the open after travelling three miles further. I mention these facts for the benefit of the pessimists who are so out-spoken about the general degeneracy of foxes and horses, not to speak of hounds or men. One pursuer was out on the 8th who rode the run I refer to with Mr. Watson's father, the pair being the sole survivors—I mean of the casualties of the day—and finishing with the hounds. He was not so fortunate to-day, as I hear he hurt his horse in the course of the gallop.

On Thursday and Friday the frost caught hold of much of the interior of Ireland, and held it in a vice-like grip, while strangely enough, much of the littoral was comparatively untouched. The Kildare hounds were due at Castletown on Saturday at eleven o'clock; it was nearer one o'clock when, after a due course of telegraphy on the subject of the progress of the thaw, the hounds were put into covert in the Castletown Woods, and could do nothing with a fox who was really but a short distance in front of them. A second was found in Killadoon, Lord Leitrim's park, who jumped the boundary wall by Lynam's, thereby gaining some minutes on his pursuers, who had to gain a wicket, and then settle on to the line afresh. Some plough did not help them much as they dragged on past Capt. Johnson's residence into Cullen's Gorse, where a couple of fresh foxes were viewed, and one was taken along at slow pace to Taghadoe. From the oak wood, or rather gorse, at the latter place, pace improved a bit, till everything subsided at Lara Gorse. Fences were greasy

enough, and two of the field had, I hear, a sitz bath of long duration in a wet ditch. The field was a small one for such a meet, Carton, the Duke of Leinster's residence, sending the strongest contingent. The best feature of the afternoon and night was a steady downpour of rain, which will soon annihilate those zones of snow which still girdle many of the fields, and reduce our horizon to its normal tints of green *vice* dazzling white.

On Monday this pack was at Kildare. All Sunday the rainfall had been excessive, but a frosty night succeeded, and the morning was fine enough to attract a large field to this most unattractive fixture. Mr. W. Forbes was sufficiently recovered to come out in mufti, and all hope he will soon be able to don his armour of proof once more. The Hon. R. Greville Nugent paid his first visit to the hunting field since his bad accident—and indeed this was his fifth time of sitting in a saddle since that misfortune, two of the other four having been at Nice recently, when he rode a winner and a second on that course. The Curragh sent its quota of thoroughbred chasers *in esse* or in embryo, and the soldier officers naturally mustered in force—would it be libellous to say that, *post hoc* or *propter hoc*, the ranks of the "habited" (I mean wearers of habits) were unusually full? A few lines must dispose of a very uninteresting day. Silliott Hill drawn blank; the gorse patches on the edge of the Curragh equally foxless. A long trot through much half-melted snow to the top of Dunmurry Hill, whence on one side there was the prospect of a huge mere (towards Rathangan), on the other a breadth of plough worthy of the Shires; while in the nearest distance the green fields seemed set in silver frames, where the snow lay drifted and comparatively deep. Then a quick find, and as quick a descent of the northern slope of the hill—which was covered with snow—a mile and a half or thereabouts in the vale, then another ascent to the Red Hills, which is a natural gorse fastness; some considerable delay in pushing the fox out of his vantage ground, and back at wretched pace to Dunmurry

Gorse again; the fox, or a fresh one, extruded from its shelter, and another excursion Red-Hill-ways. All this time sleet or melted snow was pouring down upon us, and I think the majority made a short day of it. The banks were greasy enough to put a clever horse or two down, and I think the most comforting feeling was that, bad as things were up on these lofty snow-flecked hummocks, if the line had been over tillage, scent and riding would probably have been ten times as bad. I believe they went to Boston afterwards, but of the result I am ignorant.

I can only give an account of a single day in Westmeath, the 9th inst., at Moat, when the pack met late to suit the trains and also the frost. Among the field were Mr. More O'Ferrall, and Mr. R. Malone, two ex-committeemen. Moyvaughly Gorse—from which many a good fox whose race for life I have sent at intervals to your columns has issued, and will still issue so long as Mr. T. Maher, its owner, retains sound mind and sound body—was first tried, and sent forth two foxes, one of whom was viewed away by the field, who behaved with exemplary patience. Moyvaughly River was crossed at the Ford, and the next stage is over the wide grass lands of Rahan and Rosemount to Cooltoor, and here, after a very good twenty minutes, there was a short check. The next stage is slower, over Knockart Hill, across Bishopstown, by Cooltoor, on to Streamstown, and then back again to Cooltoor, where they rolled him over in the open, after one hour and thirty minutes, which covered not much less than ten miles. Two ladies rode the run extremely well, and so did a parish priest of a sporting turn. The line was grass throughout, and it was fortunate that the chase ended when it did, as a heavy snowstorm was making riding somewhat difficult and hazardous. On the same day the Kilkenny hounds met at Knocktopher, and, owing to the state of the ground, found a very small field out. Sir John's Gorse, drawn at noon, sent out a rattling good fox, who just beat the pack into Kiltorken, after a very fast hour and ten minutes over stone walls. On Saturday, the 12th, The Ward

Union hounds had two very enjoyable gallops, and found their country good going as could be.

February 26th, 1876.

The snows have fled, Heaven speed their flight!
In green once more our fields are dight.

I wish this pæan of jubilee were literally and wholly true. The lowlands, especially towards the littoral of our island, have been clear of snow wreaths for some days, but the higher tiers of hills, though the rain-storms of the last few days and nights have had good effect on their rifted sides, are still, magpie-like, alternate black and white; while in the country just visited by the Kildare hounds many of the cottages had gigantic snowballs, or snow men, or pedestals for such heroes, piled up in front of them. ("What a place to ice our champagne!" said a Sybarite as he rode by these whity-brown masses.) It is true, however, now of the major part of the Kildare hunting grounds, and those hilly ridges which maintain such fox haunts as Elverstown, Kilteel, Downshire, etc., are completely cleared of snow and drift. This was so far a pleasant outlook on the morning of Tuesday, the 15th inst., when the Kildare hounds were due at the eighteenth milestone of the old southern mail-coach road to the metropolis. Those who hacked thither or came on wheels had nothing wherewithal to gird at in the shape of weather or atmospheric conditions. "Appone lucro," says old Horace—a very genial counsellor, who made the best of *his* surroundings, and I think every pursuer out to-day ought to take his advice, and be thankful for the change in temperature and the more improved hunting vistas now open to his ken. For, say what you like, and brazen out as you may your hardiness and insensibility to cold, your hunting keenness which knows no impediment to

progress save the veto of Jack Frost, no one who has graduated in the comforts of civilisation, and enjoyed moderately and temperately the good things and the minor luxuries of this life, can go out hunting with exultation and joy when sleet and snow pelt him by the way—when the chances are that he may spend a very *mauvais quart d'heure* in extricating himself and his hunter from a snowdrift artfully spread over the surface of a deep dry ditch, and when his ascent and descent of the more northerly hill slopes may be more of a glissade than a fair canter. No! There is a certain incongruity in donning the red paint and going forth on the war path under such dispiriting influences; and, for my own part, the lines of the great satirist, when he railed in an Ecclesiastes mood at even the transcendent feats of a Hannibal crossing the Alps with a southern army and southern-bred elephants and beasts of burden, keep on suggesting themselves.

> I nunc et sævas curre per Alpes
> Ut pueris placeas et decantatio fias.
> Go scale your rugged Alps to be
> A bye word to posterity!

We had no rugged Alps, no little avalanche or *mer de glace*, before us to-day. The hunting unities were all *en règle*, and if a westerly wind with a touch of south in it be, as our fathers taught us to believe (but we don't) the breeze most loved by Diana and her hounds, why, it was blowing freely enough for all purposes!

The meet at the cross roads by the aforesaid stone was a very populous one. The ranks of pursuers were serried ranks; and as for carriages, cars, and what Lever calls "convaniences," there was a good store of them all, to warrant any stranger out to be justified in coming to the conclusion that hunting—fox-hunting—is not the unpopular institution which one or two saturnine farmers, who say they have not received sufficient compensation for their geese or hens, and who have boasted in recent print of their vulpecidism, would lead us to suppose. Such men are no more representative of their class than were the

Tooley Street tailors of the English nation, for whom, with sartorial courage aglow, they were ready to stand sponsors. The army was represented very liberally in all ranks and arms, from the general commanding at the Curragh camp, General Seymour, to the latest-joined lieutenants of the Queen's Bays. The Marquis of Drogheda was hunting, and so were Lords Clonmell and Cloncurry, and the Baron de Robeck. The Marchioness of Drogheda surveyed the pageant of mimic warfare from a car of the period—no bad post of observation when once the difficulty of learning to sit the turns has been mastered. From Dublin came a few by train, while Mr. W. Brown and Mr. Horace Rochfort had travelled from Carlow. Mr. Gough and Mr. Rose represented Tipperary and Limerick *respectively*, and more than *respectably*. Capt. Fellowes, of the 1st Life Guards, was mounted on Conrad, one of the most accomplished of a very accomplished stud—Lord Clonmell's. As for ladies in habits, it would not be easy to count them, but they were in numbers to have made far more than a provincial field—a jock or two educating a candidate for cross-country honours; one or two gentlemen jockeys, among whom Mr. T. Beasley represents an Hibernian George Fordham or Custance, in the number of his winning mounts and his capacity for riding all ages and all steeplechase weights; all hunting Kildare—with hardly an exception; some strangers, and that's an outline of the *cortége* who filled the roads, cross and straight, near the trysting place, and whom Mr. Mansfield very soon set in motion for Dunstown Wood, a fir and oak grove of some size, which is bisected by the Carnalway Road. "Eureka! Eureka!" chants forth Rallywood, and "We *have* found him!" is the burden of seventeen couple and a half. He crosses the road, and the pack crash after him. Now, Harristown Park is not more than a mile distant, and in nearly ninety-nine cases out of a hundred is the fox's natural line; so the stampede along the straight road leading to it gathers volume momentarily. Meanwhile a very dirty, miry ride

(fit companion to those of Lower Woods which Lord Worcester knows so well) leads through Dunstown Wood a score or more of the "not-to-be-denied" class, who scorn points, and whose ways—unlike the heathen Chinee's—are straight; and these emerge out of the wood into some holding and strongly-fenced fields (where Mr. Medlicott, riding an extremely fine weight-carrier, comes to grief), past the common of Harristown and "the Barracks" at a great pace; till after eight minutes it is discovered that the fox was racing for a sewer under Mullacash Hill, which he knew well, and from which some mischievous hands had, not for the first time, removed a grating, as well as the stakes subsequently placed there when the grating was pulled away. I heard it was a remarkably fine fox, and Dunstown Wood ever rears and harbours such, having already supplied no less than three victims this season, one of them a very fast runner. Mr. Love, on a well-bred cobby mare, was going well; and so was Mr. Kearney, on a stringhalty grey that learnt a thing or two in banking and ditching under the Brindlies (father and son) at Ashbourne.

Killashee covert is drawn blank, and our next visit is to Punchestown Gorse, whose surroundings are much changed since I last saw it, as the plough has turned up all that pleasant anteroom to the gorse (so to speak), which was good as a lounge or cantering ground when a recalcitrant fox delayed his exodus beyond the point of ordinary patience. To-day the find was quick, the departure equally so. Three parts of the field take the route to the right of the gorse, the fourth go through the wicket, and gallop incontinent over the big ridge-and-furrow field to cut off the fox if he ventures to show towards the stand; but he has anticipated them, and now for a field or two there is a faint hope of a gallop, till we come to the boundary wall of the racecourse, or a little beyond it, when a rustic at work scared our fox, and hounds made next to nothing of him subsequently. Much wall jumping and larking occurred at this stage, but the

walls to a Gloucestershire man or horse would appear trivial. In Kildare walls are quite exceptional features in the hunting programme. Mr. Gough's Tipperary horse jumped his place neatly, and so did Mrs. Nugent's charming cob—and some credit is due to a lady who rides with an arm in a sling.

Elverstown Gorse is the next draw. I have described it before, so will only add that I know no much better spot for horse, man, or woman to get chilled in while the hounds explore its vast proportions. To-day we were singularly fortunate, the fox breaking sharply, and leading us off at once to the well-known ravine, up the opposite side, across a road, and then a sudden death to all scent, even on grass.

A return to Elverstown Gorse was the next feature of the day's programme. Another fox, forced out of it in the opposite direction, across the hill which overlooks Barrettstown Castle, took them across the Blessington Road, and so on to Russboro', Lord Miltown's residence; ran through the park, and got to ground in the banks of the Liffey, opposite Tulfaris House, Sir James Higginson's residence. Naturally, over these hills and steep pitches the hounds had the best of it; and, if the ground and turf had been the lightest and most elastic, few heavy men could have been near them at all, as they ran fast—scent having improved immensely after the fall of two or three venomous and biting rain and hail storms.

Eadestown is generally a natural sequence to Elverstown, and so it was to-day. A fox broke from it quickly, took the old and well-known path to Newtown after crossing the high road, tried for the generally open sewers there, and then made Forenaghts, and got into a drain under the road. Falls abounded, but no one that I could hear of suffered in flesh or bone. I had myself an escape from a wire dilemma, which I mention *pro bono publico.* Riding very leisurely on a very trained hunter, I came to a little brook with a hard gravelly bottom, on the far side of which was a small low bank covered with brambles. I looked at it *well,* as

I thought; my horse looked at it *well* before he leaped to the top. When he gained it he was hung up in wire, which we neither of us (as I believe) had discerned among the thorns. A sensible animal!—he allowed me to dismount, and the wire fastenings were so bad that they yielded, so that he got his legs out minus only a very little bit of skin and hair. A young, wild, fractious animal in such a position might have involved more serious results.

I believe this is a correct outline of the Elverstown-Tulfaris run, save in the last scene, which I only learnt subsequently. After leaving Russboro' Park, the fox ran along some woods which clothe the summits of very abrupt and precipitous banks overlooking the Liffey. The field were shut out from seeing what happened by a solid and Scotch-coped wall; the hunt servants only came up when the fox, who had been hustled into the river, was all but converted into hound flesh; and by the time the second whip had descended (and not without scrambling) the bank, a gory skull was the sole trophy extant.

I have just heard that the Kilkenny hounds had temporarily suspended hunting, owing to the death of the master's son—a calamity the pain of which no friendly sympathy can of course avert, or even hardly assuage just now; but of ample sympathy and condolence from all classes Mr. Briscoe's universal popularity will ensure any amount. The Newbridge harriers continue their very popular and successful career. On Friday, the 18th, they had a goodish day in much of the country visited by the Kildare foxhounds on the preceding Tuesday. Hares seemed less scarce than usual, and they killed two.

Turning to Wexford and its hounds, the doings of which I had no room to transfer to your columns last week. Thus on Monday, the 6th, when they met at the Island, they took a fox a long circuit, at slow pace, through a snowstorm; having a livelier time with a second, whom they ran from Wells, through Oulart, and round the base of the hill, to ground in Mr. Walsh's farm at

Raheenduff—a very sharp 33 minutes, as every horse testified. From Dranagh afterwards they ran a fox for about four miles into a rabbit burrow at Glorman Garth.

On the 8th a very sharp frost sent every one home, save the master and three kindred spirits. By 1.15 a strong sun had improved the surface, and it was at this precise time that they found their fox, who jumped out of a bush at the back of Dunbody Abbey, in full view. His line took them through Kilmarnock and Ballysop, through Slieve Kilter covert, and over the mountain, when he doubled back, entered the gorse, and was joined by two more foxes. The pack now settle on to a fresh one, and take him through Stokestown Wood, when another fox turned up, and both ran together into "the Struggle," when the hounds divided, one lot sending their fox round to the slate quarries and to ground there, the other taking theirs to the wood back again. They were, however, soon reunited, and finally stopped at 5.5 P.M., having run four foxes continuously for 3 hours 50 minutes.

On Thursday the greater part of Wexford was covered with more than six inches of snow, though, strange to say, none had fallen in the neighbourhood of Rosegarland, the fixture for the following day.

It was foxless to-day; but Horetown, the second draw, held an extraordinary stout fox. For an hour he was sent from covert to open, from open to covert, till he seemed dead beat. At last, forced to abandon this shuffling, he crossed the river at Faree, ran on through Collopswell by Newbawn, leaving Tinacarrig stronghold on his right, then crossed the river as if bound for Carnagh, but finally, recrossing it, held on over the valley to the bridge of Ballinaboula, then turned over the rock of Tinacarrig, which he ran from end to end, speeding through Kilbraney, past Ballygarvan bridge, through Abbeybraney to the bounds of Hail, where they ran him from scent to view, and rolled over the good fox after an unintermittent pursuit of 2 hours 5 minutes at good pace, and free from checks.

Friday last was quite a red-letter day with the United Hunt (Cork). I can only narrate that they found a fox at Johnson's Plantations (which seem this season ever to harbour good runners), and took him straight without a pause to Killuntin, where he got to ground, the distance being fully eight miles, which was done in very good time, as the tail which Major Dent (7th Dragoons) left behind gave good warrant for asserting.

In Louth Mr. Filgate had two very fine runs on Wednesday last, with scent most serving, the first from Hartmintown. In both cases the hounds were robbed of their prey when sinking and beat by hard luck. On Saturday hunting was stopped by frost in this country—at least the riding part of it; but, to give his pack some work, Mr. Filgate tried a bog covert in the evening, and had the satisfaction of moving no less than seven foxes out of its recesses.

The recent frosts, which seem to have leant hard on the human race, sorely afflicted the equine also. One of my own (not a valuable animal) fell a victim to the intense cold; but a hunting neighbour of mine, an amateur of all sorts and conditions of horses, hackneys and hunters and trappers, lost a very good specimen of his class (trotters) in The Buck, a small, muscular horse, barely exceeding 15 hands, who beat some fair horses at York in a trotting match, and won first prize at the Dublin show; in domestic life he was simply a treasure. Moved to extraordinary energy, perhaps, by the extreme cold of Friday last, he got through two stable doors, and was found dead next morning in a sunk fence, which perhaps he had failed to clear owing to the snow on the ground.

There is an old Italian proverb which, freely translated, may run thus:

> Who the early dawn would view,
> Downy pillows must eschew.

The majority of those who aspired to hunt the fox in the regions which own The Grange as their centre, if not necessitated to

cut off their morning slumbers so prematurely as all that, must at any rate have been early risers (in the modern acceptation of the term), seeing that the dwellers beyond Naas and Sallins—not to speak of more suburban Kildare pursuers—had the best part of twenty miles English of honest, tough collar work before them if they drove to that popular and generally lucky fixture. The outlook in the young hours of the day was not pleasant or inspiriting *per se.* The previous night had been pretty nearly one long, continuous downpour, judging by consequences, and a sort of steamy exhalation was rising from the water-logged earth. The west wind was burdened with tons of rain and mist from the great ocean; the crows were fluttering about at half speed, from their pinions being weighted with the abundant moisture. The air was very warm, and missel thrushes and blackbirds were pouring forth spring songs *à pleins poumons.* It might clear nicely by 11 A.M.; the fog clouds might lift, and then what a probable scent! and what holding turf to ride over! Such thoughts probably suggested themselves to not a few pilgrims to The Grange shrine on this special occasion. They were partly prophetic too, for by 11 A.M. the air was clear, and all trace of fog, mist, and vapour had vanished. I have before now dwelt on the hunting aspects of this fine wild undulating territory, so we may pass on at once to the meeting place, the little square (not mathematical) in the village of Grange, now gay with many red coats intermingled with black, a few carriages, and a sprinkling of habits of all shades. It is a popular meet in the best sense, not a populous one. No convenient railway station here disgorges a *posse* of the great strangely-accoutred unknown; no neighbouring city, or even town, adds its picnicking, out-for-the-day element. Here are the *aristoi* (at least in the conventional and social sense) of the land—men whom Rotten-row and the club windows in Pall Mall know well—soldiers who *have* passed through the ranks, and some who are now passing, an odd M.F.H. or two who are in the same category, some well-mounted yeomen

farmers, good sportsmen as can be, and half-a-dozen, or perhaps a whole dozen, of visitors from Meath, Carlow, and Dublin. All know each other pretty, most very, well. It is as pleasant a *réunion* as can be, and the surroundings are pleasant also. The workmanlike "hunt stables," the handsome, well-set public clock, the neat cottages, are all eloquent of "home rule," but "home rule" of the right sort.

Let us now pass on to Knockrigg Gorse, about a short mile distant. It clothes luxuriantly one side of a slope, which has a corresponding *vis-à-vis* a few hundred yards off; between them flows a brook, with very rotten, peaty banks, and a bottom now gravelly, now boggy. There is a quick find, but a slow departure, for a vixen is in the case. At last the dog fox is forced out, and for some fields he runs fast in a line parallel to the brook. Scent is evidently most congenial.

Presently he crosses the brook on his way to Golden Fort, and this his pursuers are bound to do too. A lady and a pad groom gallop on to a crossing they know of, and are all right, though much in rear of the flying pack. Of the leading men Mr. Stuart Duckett, on a very handy brown horse, works in and out, and finds himself riding a stern chase. Mr. Lister Kaye, of the Queen's Bay's, finds a bad spot, and his horse (a prize winner and a cup winner too) gets hopelessly engulfed, while the rider emerges like an Ethiopian. All get over or through somehow, and pursue an invisible pack, fortune or instinct guiding us through Golden Fort to Ballyhook Gorse; and here we came up with the hounds, who had driven their fox into covert. Ten minutes or so are spent here, and at last he breaks away towards Stratford; but, headed, after a field or two, he turns back, and another five minutes is busily occupied in ejecting him from this stronghold. Then his course is down the hill valewards, and presently we view the hounds crossing Randalstown Moor, and then turning leftwards, as if the fox meant to take them to Whitestown Gorse. This gorse, however, he leaves well on his right, and,

crossing the Dunlavin and Baltinglass Road, he works on to the high tableland which overlooks Tynte Park, whose trees he keeps always on his right. It is a line of grass, with hardly an exception, and now we are going somewhat down hill through Commonstown Farm—held by a most sporting occupant—till presently we are in the demesne lands of Rathsallagh, where old Rapid, who has gained a great lead, gets a view of our fox; but we are now in the land of trees and shrubs, and presently, near a clump of the latter, we find that this fox, like many another in past seasons, knew of an unstopped drain or hole, and of course availed himself of it; but he had run stoutly and long, and covered many a mile before he went below; so let us not rail at him, but rather at the earth stopper. The pace at first, when hounds ran away from their field, was very fast; then in the middle it slackened a bit; but as they worked up to their game it quickened much. Not a straight point-to-point run that you can liken to your hunting crop; it was, on the whole, somewhat in the form of a horseshoe whose heels are not very open. Had the Moor been out to-day, he might have charmed his Desdemona with tales "of most disastrous chances, of moving accidents by flood and field." The grey squire of Clogrennan and his grey horse were well suited in the country and its fences. I hope a few of the field have had pleasant Christmas relations with their hatters—for "crowners" were going plentifully—but I do not think any one was injured. Major Lawless had a stirrup-iron broken in a collision, and Mr. More O'Ferrall got cannoned, and had rather an escape, when going well on his favourite hunter Seagull. Ballintaggart Gorse, a mile from the finish across the fields, was next drawn. A quick find and a lively gallop, commenced with the interlude of a brook to cross, terminated in *the same unstopped hole or burrow*, or, if not the same, one very near it. Tynte Park held no fox to-day (but there was a long check, as usual, in the dining room), and the next move is to Copeland's Gorse, a very luxuriant triangle, well set on a hill slope. The

Vincent Brooks Day & Son, Lith.

"JUMP UP OLD FELLAR. I'VE CAUGHT KICKING SAL."

hounds are in, rustics fields off are making semaphores of their limbs, but in the meantime, though one fox has gone away, another has stayed behind, and the pack are forcing him outwards. Away he goes as if for the mountains to his right; but presently he inclines ever so little to northwards, and now we are sailing away, with Donard to the right, and Cryhelp nearly straight in front. A lady riding a fine bay horse is the first down; in a few fences more a double, prefaced by a wet ditch, is the scene of disaster—to one at least. Seven or eight high straight banks, rotten as medlars from the recent snow and rain, follow in quick succession; not more than a dozen are riding near the hounds! Mr. Morrogh, of the Ward Union Hunt, on a stout "Mallet" mare, is as much at home here as in the wider and sounder Dublin obstacles—perhaps the Louth side of the Ward country has helped his experience. Mr. W. Kennedy's chestnut is going like a swallow, Sir James Higginson's grey cob is jumping admirably, and Mr. Archbold's brown horse is carrying his heavy weight right well. One Carlow man has stayed on, and seen it all. We are by Cryhelp Gorse now—seventeen minutes, I hear, is the time made by the watches and watchers. I can only say that it was an extremely fast gallop. Possibly there have not been many faster this year—at least, this was the dictum of a master of hounds who thinks his pack have a turn of speed. Three foxes turned up in Cryhelp; one was hunted towards Tober, but not very cheerily. So ends my record of a very good day's sport—merely adding, in justice to the farmers and owners of the soil we rode over to-day, that *wire* was most conspicuously absent, and that a local Trinity House pilot was not required for bringing bark, brig, or full-rigged ship safely to port.

Saturday, the 19th inst., was one of those days which force of contrast alone makes us christen glorious! The evening and early night of the 18th had been an uninterrupted downpour of heavy telling rain. Towards the small hours a sharp frost suc-

ceeded the deluge, and by 10 A.M. everything in nature wore an animated and cheerful appearance. A brilliant sun sent out powerful rays in all directions, but in the shade I fancy it must have been freezing all day, and a stinging north wind, though there was very little of it, made furs and wraps a pressing necessity to the many ladies who drove to the meeting place of the Kildare hounds at Donadea Castle, Sir Gerald Aylmer's spacious residence and extensive if not over-picturesque park. It lies about midway between Sallins and Kilcock stations, and before it right and left is that fine vale through much of which the Liffey winds deviously on its way seawards. Having often dwelt long and lovingly on the grand hunting vistas which open to the eye of the traveller, whether from Meath or Kildare, as he enters this basin, between the main trunk lines of Ireland—its wealth of fattening pasture lands, its lack of woodland, the judicious distribution of gorses throughout its extent—I will only add that it has seldom revealed itself more clearly than in the transparent atmosphere of this day, which was well worthy of rivalling the best and highest noontides of the American Indian summer. The days are now comparatively long, so that masters may relax a bit from the precision of their punctuality; and, sooth to say, Mr. Mansfield was extra gracious to-day to those whom trains *en retard*, slow Jarveys, or innate tardiness delayed for twenty minutes behind the time table. It is a goodly assembly collected together in front of Sir Gerald Aylmer's castellated gateway—a shady spot facing the north, and not conducive to those harmonies of colour in the human face divine which we all admire so much, or to that sleekness or bloom of coat which every groom is ambitious of for his charges. One slashing thorough-bred hunter, Mr. J. Brook's, evidently rebelled against the chill of delay when his fiery soul was in the fray, for his first performance was to leap over a smaller hunter and carry his master some very considerable distance at good speed along the high-road. At last the very large assembly (in which, if the Kildare element predominated,

other counties and many regiments—Guards, Line, Lancers, Hussars, Artillery, and Dragoons—reinforced it considerably) is set in motion. We are not to go into the park, but along the park wall till we come to the old Donadea Gorse proper, on the top of a hill which has been the terminus of more than one good gallop this season. A quick find here; a spectacular gallery departure, the ladies on wheels being especially favoured, for the fox ran a line parallel to the road for some distance, and then back again; twenty minutes' slow, bad hunting, with hardly any scent, even when hounds were close to their game, and the fox is given up; and in some three miles more we are on the edge of the park-like fields of Hortlands, the large array forming mainly one long twisty line at the back of a very narrow bank with a widish gripe on the far side—the gorse in which the pack have proclaimed a find in front, and every one at attention for a start, and a trying fence in front of his horse. A few moments of this sort of strained suspense seem preternaturally long, so I cannot undertake to say how many moments elapsed before a hundred horses or more were in the air simultaneously, and those who landed safe either galloping to a gate in front of them or to a bank and ditch leading into a road; both lots—the gaters and the leapers—have to jump a narrow-topped bank and ditch out of the road; and here I believe disaster rained down heavily on the ranks of pursuit, and a loose horse was not a singular spectacle. This fence and a deep drop once jumped, fine wide galloping pastures are before us. We are *en route* to Cappagh or Ballycaghan, *not* to Donadea, as hoped and expected when we started; but the fox has stopped and turned back, and we are once more at Hortlands Gorse. Through this he is forced pretty sharply, and sent across the park at good pace. Strong quickset hedges now sadly interfere with straight riding; places have to be studiously picked, and groups collect at the practicable spots. Lord Langford and one or two hard men get over a high greasy bank safely, but little is by this time known of the pack; wire arrests some of the fore-

most. But meantime a hard-riding farmer, Mr. Bayly, well known in the Meath and Dublin countries for his straight and determined method of sending his hunters along the war path, has caught the faint strains of hound music in the distance, and he gallops in the direction forthwith. Five couple of hounds he found running a fox; but where the pack divided, or when, I cannot say. Certain it is that alone he went on with them over the vale towards Donadea, killed his fox, got bitten in handling him, and brought home his trophies, as the body of the pack were working on to the now somewhat stale line. Meanwhile some curious episodes have been going on. A hard-riding man on a steeplechase horse has been carried at break-neck pace round and round a field; falls show their consequences on hats, coats, and breeches; Mr. Knox, R.H.A., had a bad two minutes under his hunter in a very wet ditch, and, as somebody remarked, from a very *hard man* (as he is) became in two minutes a very soft one. Once more we are macadamising; and now our aim is Cappagh Gorse—no brighter or better situated, I warrant, in Her Majesty's wide domains. A tolerably quick find, and tremendous crowding at the first fence, then wide fields and wide fences, and lots of galloping, till we get to Ballycaghan Gorse, some two miles distant. Then a long delay, much portable refreshment taken, and a long bask in a sun, which might have ripened peaches in August; but at last we are galloping and jumping again, not exactly over the same fields, but more or less in the same direction. Once it seemed as if our Cappagh fox had a mind to lead us into the pleasant pastures of Meath, and try the hospitable earths at Agher or Summerhill; but no! Cappagh is his home, and thither he is bound. All roads, he thinks, lead to it, as they say—or said in the old days, of the pilgrims—that all paths lead to Rome. More delay now ensues, and more bustling on the green hill-top; but at last he is forced out in the Enfield direction, and here a very painful scene occurs, which I cannot, in the truth of our fox chronicles, altogether slur over, but which I will narrate as concisely and as dispassionately as I can.

Will Freeman (who got knocked over like some others earlier in the day) has emerged from the gorse, horn in hand. The hounds are streaming away down a wide slope of pasture. The field, at least the vast majority of them, are cut off from the pack by a very thick bullfinch of the strongest quickset, with a deep drop. It has one or two spots in its extent weaker than the rest; there is a rush to them. Mr. Bayly charges one spot on a clever brown horse, and is turned over heavily, though I believe not much hurt. In another place one of the Queen's Bays, Mr. Griffith, who has been going well all day, charges a corresponding spot; horse and man roll heavily on the green sward below. Mr. A. Love, who is next him, jumps off at once, and picks him up; the horse is all right; the man for many minutes seems a crushed and lifeless mass. Of course a crowd gathers. What has done it? At last a treacherous strand of strong wire is detected drawn through the strong fence, which needed no fortifying. The offender—who has, it appears, done some abominably unsportsmanlike things already, and very recently—is quickly identified. Indignation is at boiling-point, and soon finds vent in the exercise of one or two hunting crops and cutting whips. The peasantry about the gorse did not support or back him; they were shocked at the outrage and its consequences. Meanwhile the prostrate officer revives. "Kilt, not killed," is, thank God, the verdict of nature, youth, and a strong constitution. The beaten man's womankind are now treating us to an Irish cry! *Vamos; jam satis!* Let us trot our weary leagues home! Why there was so much grief to-day I am wholly unable to explain. Horses were not stale as a rule; the fences were large, but generally untrappy, and the pace was never good enough to cause mischief. Gen. Seymour got an apparently very ugly fall; so did Mr. Hamilton, though he rode all day after it. Col. Forster indulged in a brace, the Hon. C. Bourke in one, and so *ad infinitum.* Perhaps the recent rain, snow, and glazing frost had something to say to the slippery state of affairs.

Westmeath has not produced anything so good as the Moyvaughly run since I last wrote, the hunting diary thence reading somewhat thus. On the 14th, meeting at Killucan, they found three foxes at Clonlost, and took one fast towards Jeffrystown, when scent failed. A second run from Cooksboro' to Knockdrin was unsatisfactory from the same cause. On the 16th, meeting at Baronston, they found lots of foxes there, but no scent to expel them from the park. Sonna was drawn blank. Clonhugh yielded a brace, one of whom was sent along by the Flag of Gaine to Kilmaglish Gorse, where he did not hang a second, but turned towards Knockdrin, whose woods he only skirted, and eventually won his way to the open earths at the Crooked Wood. In this gallop scent and pace had improved vastly.

On the 18th they were at Middleton Park, and forced away four foxes, three of which ran together to the hill coverts, where one was killed. The two others went away over a capital line, but the hounds stuck pertinaciously to the home-stayer. They then drew Kilpatrick Gorse, and, finding at once, ran their fox to Leydestown Wood close by. Twice he broke for the open, and as often turned back, eventually getting to ground in a rabbit burrow. Scent was most serving to-day, but luck was against good sport.

On Monday, the 21st, a very large proportion of the hunting world, and almost all hunting soldiers, gravitated towards Newbridge, on whose little hippodrome the first bit of leap racing of the season came off very successfully, but most drip pinglyand dirtily—as many a besmirched silk jacket and unrecognisable cap can testify. We have had some soft days this season—a few very soaking days—but this Monday was *facile princeps* in its persistent downpour and discharge of water. Spite of these drawbacks, there was hardly standing room on the bleak, unsheltered stand; and the sea of heads and the wilderness of dripping frieze coats bear witness to the abiding popularity of even this diluted sort of chasing among all classes. History tells us of conduits

running with canary, and fountains of Bordeaux, on the occasion of royal weddings and such like imperial pageants. The British army has improved on that semi-barbarous form and prodigal profusion and waste. Champagne, *mousseux* from well-corked bottles, is worth gallons of the other flat stuff, and, though no fountains were apparent, the reservoir seemed as inexhaustible as Houdin's magic bottle. The Royal Artillery and Queen's Bays were the kindest and most courteous of hosts, and all inside their well-stored tents made good weather of it, regardless of the rain-storm without. *Le bon sang ne ment pas* was well illustrated to-day by June Wine, own brother to Scots Grey, who ran away with the chief race, spite of his having during the last few years enacted alternately and at short intervals the very opposite parts of hunter, harrower, and chaise horse. Most of the prizes of the day went to the Jockey Hall stable.

Scent has not been propitious to the Meath hounds during the last ten or fifteen days, so sport has not been up to the Meath earlier standard by any means.

On the 14th they took a fox from Kingsfort to Oakley, where he got to ground, and the afternoon only produced very unexciting runs from Farrenalcock and Robertstown.

On the 15th they found a fox at Kilcarty Gorse, but made little of him; the evening gallop from Killeen through Dunsany to Tara was better.

On the 17th they had a sharp gallop from Bengerstown, through Ricetown, to ground. From Headstown they hunted a fox towards Mountainstown; a hound bolted him out of a drain, in which he had ensconced himself, and the pack soon killed him.

On the 18th, meeting at Clifton Lodge, they ran a fox fast from Tullanahogue to Talgard, and lost him. From Rathmore they had a good gallop over a very intricate country to Meadstown, falls being thick as gooseberries.

On the 19th the hounds slipped away in high wind from Annagh into Loughcrew, leaving most of the field lamenting.

allowed the pack to get perilously close to him. His course lay by Mr. Whitelaw's residence, past a venerable cemetery, and then in about another mile into a wilderness of flat fields, with a good deal of plough through them, which are divided by deep and broad ditches, occasionally margined by a high bank bristling with a sturdy growth of quicks and brambles. Rathcoffey House—a semi-ruin—has been left on the hand of the same name. Windgates Hill is to the right. Before us is the tower of Taghadoe, and through the breaks in the hedges may be seen the modest spire of Lady Chapel. Hounds have run so far very fast, considering that the fox has given himself the benefit of the strong breeze. Presently he turns leftwards, passes by Rathcoffey, and, after not a few checks, near Painstown, is lost to scent and hunting purposes. A remarkably fine hunting run, with a brilliant commencement not sustained towards the close. There was a good deal of grief, naturally, from the holding nature of the water-logged ground, and the stretching nature of the obstacles. "What chasms you seem to have here!" says a recently-joined Lancer, as he sends an English-bred five-year-old over some specimens of the *divides* in this part of the country; but it was *the* great *divide* which was responsible for arresting the career of some of the best and the hardest of the day's field. It is a huge ditch, with a bank hirsute with all sorts of thorny growths, and doubly repulsive from having been recently cleaned out, and thereby increased in width and depth. It divides, I believe, two farms, held by Messrs. Comerford and M'Konkey, and those who had the good luck to be on the left bank when the fox made his turn were indeed fortunate; for, between selecting a likely spot or trying to get round, the majority of the cis-"divide" pursuers were out of the hunt for several minutes, and I hear some travelled long distances ere they caught them. I should have stated that some of the latter portion of this run was over the original Kildare Red Coat racecourse. Lodge Park is the next scene; the field are sent round by the river walk. With the Liffey flowing on their right, two

very large grass tracts to their left, those who were in position and "eyes left" presently saw a very large fox, who might almost have been taken for a red bull calf, loping leisurely along and across these pastures. The hounds are soon on his line, forcing him across the Celbridge Road, through Straffan, and then for a short time in the direction taken by our first forenoon fox; but he did not persevere, or was headed, and turning to the right, he re-entered Lodge Park, was hustled about for some time, and at last forced across the Liffey, where he ran by Lower Turnings, over the fine grass farm of the same name, till he beat the hounds completely, from want of scent, not far from Mr. Mill's house.

Castle Dillon, Major Barton's new and most successful gorse, was next visited, and in about ten minutes a fox was seen racing away out of it, over a grand line of grass, which had only one fault, that it was bounded by the railway some half mile or rather more in front. For a few fields it is very pleasant, and a high-banked brook unwired on either side is positively an inspiriting novelty. Some go in and out, some clear it; but here we are at a level crossing with both gates locked in front of us. Mr. A. Macneil is the *deus ex machinâ*, or rather *ex sellâ*, on the occasion —his hammer-headed whip and nippers have done good service to prisoners in pursuit ere now—and in two minutes we are galloping after the pack, and catching them at the Henry Bridge over the canal. For a few yards the line is along the cross road, then it turns off over Mr. Reid's grass farm, skirts Boston Gorse, and leads us up halfway to Cullen's Wood. Here our fox was headed by some workpeople, and turned to the right over a road, and through one of Lord Cloncurry's grass farms; another road is now crossed, and we are galloping by the ruin on the top of Oughterard Hill, through the outskirts of Bishopscourt Park, till scent, which has been suspended by a very severe hail and rain storm, seems to die away to nothing as we near Mr. Hope's house.

The light men did not run away from the field to-day (as one sees them do sometimes in the upper country), spite of the sodden

nature of the ground; indeed, the weight-carriers were rather prominently in the van occasionally; among them, Pharos-like, was a broad-backed pursuer, who had lost his last edition of Lincoln and Bennett's works in a brook, and replaced his head-gear with a travelling cap of light hue which he had borrowed from the nearest house he passed. But among many hard-riding men—young and old, soldiers and civilians, who seemed bent to extract everything of enjoyment that the day was capable of yielding—no one seemed to savour the galloping and jumping more keenly than a well-mounted squire from a northern county—grey, and all grey his colour, horse and man—quite in the van of pursuit.

I send you a brief outline of the performances of the Louth hounds, which, if not quite so brilliant as their recent triumphs, are still a very fair average. On the 16th ult., meeting at Townley Hall, they drew it blank, but found at Dowth, and had a smart ten minutes to ground. Crewbawn and Mellifont proved blanks. Glenmere held a fox, but they killed him in covert.

On the 19th they met at Collon, found at once, and sent their fox into a sewer, from which they bolted him, when he ran round the demesne, and was rolled over by Branagan's Cross. The second fox, found at Tenure Gorse, was killed in a few fields; the third, from Drakestown, proved a ringer; the fourth, turned up at Skedog, ran by Newtown Chapel and Green Hills into Adare—40 minutes so far very good, with only one slight check. Then the line leads through Adare, and by Mitchelstown, over the river to a point not far from Bengerstown, by Lyddan Church, over Footstown, and back to near Moretown, when he tried a sewer in vain, and then scratched himself into a burrow, where he was left in peace, as he had given a sporting run of one hour and a half, in which pace, distance, and some sharp hills combined to tell out horses thoroughly. Those familiar with the topography will perceive that the greater part of this run was through Meath territory.

Davidstown, the residence of Mr. Robert Archbold, is situated on the extreme verge of the Kildare territory, where it is conterminous with the Carlow and Island country. Indeed, I am not sure that the house and grounds are not actually partly in the two counties of Wicklow and Carlow—at any rate, it is a very long distance, not only from the metropolis of Ireland, but also from the metropolis of Kildare, Naas, and from its hunting "hub," Jigginstown, where the new Kildare kennels have their local habitation. The distance to those riding and driving is considerably lengthened by the fact of the levels of the two districts varying by many hundred feet, Davidstown being on a lofty wind-swept plateau, while Naas and Jigginstown are not very much higher than the sea. These drawbacks notwithstanding, a few resolute pursuers wended their way thither on Wednesday, the 23rd, being pelted pitilessly for some of their journey by hail mixed with snow-flakes, driven onwards by a bitterly cold west wind of most abnormal temperature. A meet of foxhounds is a festival for all classes—peasants, patricians, and proletarians—in this most sporting district, and the three or four squires who live within a reasonable distance of the fixture invariably open hospitable portals to the travelling pursuers; no one more widely or generously than the lord of Davidstown Manor, who is a staunch supporter of all genuine sport (he keeps a smart pack of harriers for the neighbourhood), and a pillar and buttress of the hunting state in this part of the Kildare hunting grounds. When I add that the gentleman in question is some 6ft. 5in. tall, and of proper proportions, the metaphor may be taken as literally and substantially true. Davidstown House is a fine square pile of buildings, under the lee of Hughestown Hill, and another whose name I know not, or cannot at this moment recall; while in front, separated by some marshy meadows, stands Corbally Hill, a huge wart rising out of the plateau, whose size and extent detract somewhat from its apparent height. The house is surrounded by fine clumps of laurel and yew, and rhododendron, which yield good harbourage for foxes, while in the skirting woods

the timber has been allowed to attain a girth and height not very common in Ireland. Fine days and rough days seem to alternate just now like the contents of a packet of sandwiches; but the morning of the 24th, or rather its forenoon, was about the best specimen of a spring day which the young year has vouchsafed us so far. Snow, I was told, fell during the night; if so, by eleven o'clock there was not a trace of it left, Lug-na-Cuilla in the distance being the only snow-covered object that the eye rested upon in scanning the horizon. A warm bright sun brought out every object in its richest and best hues, and gave a burnish and enamel to the leaves of holly and laurel. The sounds all round were the sounds of spring, and the crows above and in the fields were evidently full of their nesting arrangements and spring operations.

A small cavalcade, less than two score, is collected together at one of the approaches to Davidstown. Lord Clonmell is perhaps the most distant arrival, for Bishopscourt cannot be much under thirty miles from this point of rendezvous, and there seems to be no one else from that neighbourhood. Carlow is represented by Messrs. Eustace and Bunbury, while Wicklow, Kildare, and I think the Queen's County, also add their small quotas, Mr. Wheble, of Berkshire, being among the visitors. It is a morning for lingering and loitering, so there is a little of both at the meet, and much coffee-housing also; and one learns with regret that an entire district in a neighbouring hunt has been shorn of foxes by 'undertaking' trappers, properly so called (though it cannot be said that they give the foxes they kill anything but maimed and imperfect funereal rites). A leisurely move is presently made to Sheriff's Hill, a quarter of a mile distant or thereabouts, where a good holding gorse, unenclosed at one end, crowns the gentle eminence. The owner and the occupier of the land both take pride in always having a fox or two to answer the hound summons (some five were killed hereabouts in cubbing time), and this day was no exception. The find was

very quick, and the scent in the gorse must have been very good, as the fox was hustled out of his vantage ground directly. His course is valewards, and about due east, where in the far hazy distance Blackstairs and Mount Leinster reveal their large indistinct outlines. A high straight bank is the first obstacle to be crossed. Mr. M'Clintock Bunbury on a smart bay horse, who used to figure on the correct card of the day as 'Smash-all Sweeney,' or some such characteristically fierce name, carries his owner very temperately over it, and first, thereby showing that he has earned his more commendable title of 'Placid Joe' fairly and honestly. There are no loose horses so far; the second fence, a drop, is well done by the hunters steered by Capt. Lee and Mr. Lister Kaye of the Bays, while the hunt servants are riding on the right, the field far on the left. It is down hill—a gentle decline—and a bit of plough once left behind, the hounds begin to race; a water jump with swampy edges rather arrests pursuers, and when next the hounds are seen they are a very long way ahead, running hard up the shoulder of Corbally Hill, past the trees of Mr. Paine's house. A road now offers safety and sound going to some who have got behind, and whose horses want a pull already; the fox slips over the shoulder of the hill, and, running fast for a mile or two, reaches an open hole of some kind not far from 'Graney,' a well-known Carlow covert. Who-whoop! who-whoop! Twenty minutes, very fast. Hughestown Hill did not hold a fox to-day, but its neighbour Tinoran had good store of tods harbouring in its gorse and wild brakes. One was taken along merrily towards the yellow earths, then back towards Hughestown, then round the big base once more, till he finally beat off the pack, getting to ground not very far beyond Baltinglass. By the time the day was far advanced, and Whitestown Gorse, which was meant as the *bonne bouche* of the evening, was postponed for another occasion, and its fox or foxes reprieved, though indeed it is not probable that scent would have been very serving, as

a very chilly evening replaced the glowing noon, and a thin rain began to set in.

In the Queen's County Mr. Cosby had a fast gallop from Rossmore towards Rock Forest on Thursday, the 15th, and some hunting with two foxes from Kilcoke, who rang about Cashen's Gorse.

On the 17th they were at Spink Cross Roads, and lost a Moyadd fox, after a sharp thirty-five minutes. From Derryfore they took a fox to Lennon's Gorse, forced him through it, and on to Moyadd, where I believe he was let in; scent was better on this occasion than it had been for many days in these hunting grounds.

The Newbridge harriers found a very good stout hare in the low-growing grass lands on the Curragh side of Naas on Friday, the 25th, and had a very lively ring with her, ultimately losing her on Mr. Robinson's lands. They had a very sharp gallop on the Wednesday previously from Pollardstown, and a second straight and fast from Crotonstown to beyond Newbridge, the hare taking her pursuers over part of the Curragh to try conclusions as to speed and stamina—needless to add, she failed.

On Saturday, the 26th inst., the Kildare hounds were advertised to be at the flagstaff, Curragh Camp, at eleven A.M.—a new rendezvous for this pack, and one which was probably adopted in compliment to the soldier-officer element, which so largely swells the ranks of pursuit in this country. The irony of circumstance or fate, or whatever you please to call it, was never more aptly or untowardly illustrated than on this occasion. The great plain of grass which we know so well as the Curragh, its Celtic denomination, is, roughly speaking, the terminus of the hunting grounds of Kildare, as to the westwards mere and peat moss usurp a large proportion of the soil, with bights, as it were, of light gravelly soil interjected between these amphibious domains of the snipe, plover, and wild goose. Of the size of

this vast sheep walk, the finest hippodrome, I should imagine, in the world, I cannot give any exact idea; but one thing I do know—that if you find yourself on the back of a stable-proud, runaway beast, who is too fresh and full of himself to be a safe or comfortable conveyance, you can easily find five miles of a gallop without bending much to the right or left; and if he pulls you hard at the end of that space you may assure yourself that you have a fair hunter, so far as galloping and staying distance is concerned, for he will have strided up not a few sharpish undulations in the journey. The highest of these has the honour of bearing the flagstaff, which, with the neighbouring clock tower, is quite a landmark for the whole vicinity for many a square mile. Over this plain the west wind was careering this forenoon with the most uncontrolled violence, as between the Curragh, Staten Island, or the banks of Newfoundland there is absolutely nothing to check its onslaught. Judge, then, what a storm-tossed congregation was collected together to-day on this bleak temple of the winds—the lee of the huts of the 99th regiment having been prudently chosen for obvious causes, while the hounds were huddled together in so small a group that, for all you could see, there might not have been ten couple, instead of eighteen or nineteen, on the green sward. And here, before we face the tempest, let me do justice, though ever so feebly, to the kindness and hospitality of the soldiers in whose lines we found ourselves this morning. Col. Dunne and his officers were simply ubiquitous, going about everywhere and pressing all comers to partake of the good things they had purveyed for them in the way of eating, drinking, and smoking. The other regiments were, I believe, equally kind; but, on the *vrai Amphitryon* principal, I name the 99th and their gallant colonel.

The meet, spite of weather considerations, was very well attended—a couple of fine hours in the early morning, just as many breakfasts were in progress, having probably acted as decoys. Of ladies in carriages, polo carts, cars of the period

and country, as Pepys might have said, there was good store. The ladies equitant were also very numerous, while the men were in about the usual proportion, though, strangely enough, I did not notice many visitors from other hunting grounds. An officer of the Queen's Bays, who met with an accident not long ago, wore a sort of armour on one knee; a double set with cuisses also would not be a bad costume for one of these Curragh celebrations, seeing they are attended by clouds of light horse—very light indeed of their hind legs, who, like all thoroughbreds, can do any amount of injury to horse or rider when they let out playfully. Somebody said they ought to be segregrated like the ancient lepers. To-day I must say they were wonderfully well-behaved. But we are in motion at last, running close-hauled in the eye of a very fierce rain, wind, and hail storm, across the Curragh in the French Furze direction; presently we branch off to the left, and after a mile or two come to a very famous but now somewhat disused covert, known as Barn Hill. There had been too much rain of late to give it a fair chance, for it is in a swampy neighbourhood; so we trot on to Martinstown, under the auspices of its popular tenant, Mr. J. Hamilton. No fox in the laurels, no fox in the oak woods! Too dripping for that; so we go on to the gorse at the edge of the plantations. Some minutes elapse; a fierce storm is just about to break; the woods offer the semblance of shelter, and many avail themselves of it. No fox in Martinstown. What a portent! So we gossip away on the edge of the wood, thinking we commanded everything and that we could not miss the hounds; but *we* did. Something in the air proclaims a find. We are cantering on towards Ballysax—who the guide I know not; but the force of numbers is overwhelming on such occasions. What fortuned was this: The fox turned his mask towards Newtown, giving himself the benefit of the semi-tempest. When he had gone a few fields on this line something turned him, for he presently faced the storm boldly, and ran gallantly till he found

himself inside Halverstown racecourse (where the next lep-race meeting is to be held in the coming week), and here he got to ground. The pace, as was naturally to be expected under such circumstances, was very good; and, as plough abounded, with an admixture of swampy land, the hounds had naturally by far the best of the short spin. Among those who, I hear, did not let them get too far away, were Messrs. Linde, Aitkin, R.H.A., and Love, and I heard also that some young ladies who made their *début* to-day rode the line (not an easy one) very well indeed. Giltown Gorse held, as it always does, a fox or two. One broke by the house, leaving the lake and its swans to the right, ran over the park, crossed the Kilcullen Road, entered Mr. Gaussen's fields, and made his way by the river banks into Sallymount. Here, in a clump near the house, the pack got very close to him, but he dodged them successfully among trees and shrubberies, and got to ground in Mr. Gaussen's land. The rain now caused a general dispersion.

It has been a source of regret to me not to have been able to visit the Tipperary hounds this season, as I hear from good judges that their sport has been of a high character—while the country in many places is the perfection of hunting grounds. The following is an outline of a good day's sport on the 19th inst. Meeting at Moburnaham, Mr. Tennant's residence, the master, Mr. B. Going, found a goodly assembly waiting to greet his pack, among them Lord Donoughmore, Col. Stapleton, Col. French, Major Barton, Mr. Massey, Capt. Golden, Mr. Amcotts, Messrs. Borton, Ryall, Gough, Grubbs, Russell, Shea, Blackmore, etc. The Home Wood did not hold to-day, so Lloyd's Furze was visited, and here a brace of foxes turned up. The hounds, settling to one, sent him through Moburnaham, across the Coleraine Road, to near Price's Gorse, then, with an inclination to the right, through Silver Fort, by Beachmount and Woodhouse, back to Lloyd's Furze; they pushed him through these without a pause, across the river, when he got to ground in Rathcoole—50

minutes with only a single check. Two parallel roads favoured the field, or the numbers up might have been far less than they actually were. There was a find in Kilmocken Hill; but earths were opened, for it was a vixen.

Three foxes turned up in Colman Gorse; one was forced away towards Gun Wood, when he turned to the right, and ran through Clonacody, Major Kellett's place, leaving the old church of Donoughmore on his right, thence through Mr. O'Neil's farm by the old covert of Rathconan, by Mr. Phillip's farm, till the hounds were stopped close to the town of Clonmel—a fine hunting run of about ten miles, of which the beginning was fast, the end a very fair hunting pace.

Mr. Cosby had a number of visitors on Thursday, the 24th, when his hounds met at Sheffield. From this they had a ring, good in bits; another ring from Cremorgan, and a short pursuit into Coolnabacca. From Sling they had a very fast twenty-five minutes to Cremorgan *viâ* Cullenagh, and some slower hunting afterwards, which ended in Coolnabacca also—1 hour 20 minutes.

I should have stated that two foxes were found in Harristown, Kildare, on the 26th, but gave no sport.

On Saturday, the 26th, Mr. Cosby's hounds, the Queen's County, had a very fair day's sport, though the riding part of it was sadly marred by *wire*. On this day they met at Ballylinan and found their first fox at Popefield. The hounds pushed him out towards Kelly's Glen, a capital line; but three wired fences in succession left the hounds to themselves, the field coming up at a check when the fox turned near Ballinagarde, and ran back to Popefield. A second fox was hunted at Ballyadams, but with little sport or success. Scent has returned to Meath after a full fortnight's absence—witness some of the results, which I regret I can only give in mere outline. On the 21st they met at Brittas, found there, and killed their fox in Whitewood; eighteen minutes sharp after this from Blake's Gorse to Dover, then a fast forty

minutes from Rathmano to Newtown, ending in a kill. On the 22nd they met at Somerville, found in Welsh's Gorse, and ran across the Swollen Hurley—fourteen feet of water, (the master, M'Bride, and a few more got over well; the rest got in and out, Mr. Dunville having the bad luck to kill a very valuable mare)—by Riverstown on to the Gainstown windmill, when they lost him, after six miles done in forty minutes; a beautiful line of country. After this they had a very nice quick gallop from Corballis Gorse by Corbalton Reisk and Kilrue, marking to ground near Mullaha chapel. Few were able to stay with the hounds in this scurry. On the 23rd they met at Bloomsbury in blinding hail-storms. After some hunting about Martry, and some more from Allenstown, they drew the inexhaustible Rathmore. A good fox took them over the Hill of Ward, by Athboy, through Gillstown covert and Moyagher, to the top of Faughan Hill in Allenstown Park, where hounds were taken off, as there are too many foxes here to allow hounds a chance. This was a really fine run—pace, distance, and the line of country being taken into account. On the 24th they killed a fox at Loughcrew, had a short excursion from Kilgar, and a faster and longer one from Crosskeys, through Galmoyston by Clonabraney into Loughcrew. On the 26th, meeting at Larracor, they had a fast thing from Moneymore through Tobertinan towards Scariff Bridge, where scent failed.

In the neighbouring county, Louth, Mr. Filgate has also shown a succession of good sport. On the 22nd, meeting at Mansfieldstown, they found a plethora of foxes at Bragganstown, and one was taken along at lively pace to Drumcashel; here the pack divided. Lisrenny produced lots of foxes, who ran some wide rings. On the 24th they were at Julianstown, and ran a fox to ground under the railway, from Ballymad Gorse by Tilltown and Calpe—a good twenty minutes. A second they raced from Ballygarth, through Greenhill, to Gormanstown, where he passed the earths, on for Whitestown, but was rolled over ere he could

attain its woods—five miles as the crow flies, done in thirty minutes, the fox eaten when the field came up, tells its own tale. On the 26th they were at Churchtown, and had a good twenty minutes from the gorse, some slow hunting afterwards from Churchtown to Clonbranton, and a very good thirty-five from Rathory to Ardee House coverts, the fox viewed dead beat in front.

The Ward Union hounds had three very good gallops last week, the best perhaps on Saturday last; while on Monday the Kildare hounds had a very fine hunting run of fifty-two minutes, with a kill in the open, from Bishopscourt *viâ* Lyons to near Castle bagot covert. I will send details next week.

March 11*th*, 1876.

Since the recent glacial period we have had a succession of rain and wind storms for nearly a fortnight—till the country is perfectly saturated with water, the ditches brimfull, and all the inequalities in the grass fields are converted into miniature lakes. The nights have been very wet, and, generally speaking, a couple of sunshiny hours about ten o'clock have deluded the weak-minded into the belief that they were in for a fine day, and led them to make corresponding arrangements. Such a morning was the 28th of February—sunshiny, warm, and muggy, with everything to prognosticate burning, glowing scent. The revolving months had brought the Kildare hounds to their starting point, Johnstown Inn; and the fine weather, backed up by a mendaciously rising glass, the proximity to Sallins station, and other attractions, made the muster to the little village a fairly large one, though infinitely inferior in point of numbers to the crowd collected together to view the *lever du rideau* in November. Naas wore an animated look as one rode through it. Its rath and spire and church tower bathed in soft light, the cricket ground, with its permanent luncheon room, mocked us

with its hints of summer and spring joys, now, alas! approaching too rapidly. The pigeon-shooting grounds took up the same parable; and the young lambs in the fields hard by pointed the same moral with their frolicking, bushy tails. The meet is a late one, out of consideration to certain sportsmen from a neighbouring county and hunt, who are known to be steaming up by the Great Southern and Western line; and, sooth to say, it is no hardship to wait and bask a bit, and listen to the busy murmur of tongues in the peopled street before proceedings commence. Presently a procession is formed through Mr. Hendrick's gates, leading up to Kerdiffstown House, past it, and on to the gorse, which occupies a secluded field, within four or five hundred yards of which the array of pursuit is marshalled, with the strictest injunction not to pass certain limits. The limits, however, are liberal, and it is a pleasant place to gossip and coffee-house in during the anxious moments of suspense. The stranger list is not a very large one, Dublin of course sending a few visitors; but the Queen's County is well represented by its master, Mr. Cosby, by Mr. Hamilton Stubber, Mr. Skeffington Smyth, and Mr. Webber—a strong quartette, and well mounted. The gorse is drawn blank, so we cross the river Morrill, and soon find ourselves in the neighbouring park of Palmerstown. In one of the plantations or spinneys, which I suppose has a local name, though I am not aware of it, a fox turned up. His first impulse was canalwards; but presently his vulpine mind seemed made up for Bishopscourt, and thither he led us over some holding fields, watered by sandy brooklets, and in some inexplicable way was lost between Bishopscourt and Painstown (a new and rather smart farmhouse), though the how and the why is not given me to explain. Those who know all about foxes say he went on to Bishopscourt Gorse; *non nostrum est tantas componere lites;* perhaps he did—at any rate, *we* did, and very leisurely, arriving outside the well-known grove which shades the gorse twenty minutes after him. No fox in the gorse,

Mirum! passing strange! Five minutes afterwards we are struggling through the little gateway and trembling for knee-caps. Some rattle along *ventre à terre*, by the causeway, to command the Naas and Dublin Road, and it may be to head the fox—but that's a small matter; others gallop by the gorse, emerge by the park wall, and, after a couple of fields and a little wall and brook practice, gain the same line of road, hitting it at a different point; among the foremost out are Will Freeman, Lord Clonmell, and Mr. W. Kennedy. The Naas Road is now crossed, a difficult bank overcome, and Kill Hill with its neighbouring gorse is gained; of course its summit is filled with on-lookers. The fox saw them, crouched down in a furry ditch, then galloped back *coram populo*, crossing the road, and jumping the park wall of Bishopscourt beautifully as any greyhound. He was seen by many; and a good many who ought to know that now, if ever, silence is golden, holloaed and shouted till the hounds threw their heads up in wonderment and perplexity, and no longer stuck to their lesson. Back to Bishopscourt again, while a sketcher of men and horses in funny attitudes had ample food for pencil and wit in seeing a small brook and bank jumped (banks can be broken there as well as at Monaco). Whether our fox ran through the Bishopscourt Gorse or not, or only the edge of it, I cannot say; certainly, he did not hang there an instant, but made his way through the plantations, and crossed the road which leads to Straffan Railway Station; thence, leaving Mr. Hope's house to the right, he made his way to Pigeon Hill (a large furry sort of hummock, with lying for two or three brace of foxes in its wide extent), crossed the left shoulder of it, and leaving Athgoe and its earths to the right, he raced over a bit of very holding vale bisected by a large hairy double, honeycombed with rabbit holes, and ran up the hill to the park wall of Lyons, Lord Cloncurry's residence. Few crossed this double where the hounds crossed it, though Mr. W. Kennedy showed them the way. Some chose weaker spots they remembered in

previous experiences; some knew of a road not far off. I believe I am correct in stating that Lyons Park wall was built expressly (in the best interests of sport) to exclude foxes from the woods and park of Lyons, and give hounds a chance of keeping their game in the open; it is a Titanic structure, some 13 feet high I should think, and coped Scotch fashion atop. Why the fox chose his path by this impassable wall it were hard to say, unless you can conceive that he knew of one weak spot in it where I believe the masonry had crumbled, but which has now been boarded up; at any rate, he ran by it till he reached the Dublin Road, and along this he took his course for a bit, to the temporary arrest and hesitation of the pack, though they were not lifted or cast; on then through New Castle by Mr. Gradon's residence, through Mr. Connor's fields, till, nearing a farm of Mr. Leonard's (a good sportsman, and well entered to fox and stag), which rejoices in the name of Blundellstown I believe, his stiffened limbs found the fences too big, and he was viewed propping himself on a bank. A gory pate goes back to Bishopscourt, for its lord *will* have the scalp of as good a fox as ever went forth on the war or love path preserved for his lodge, *Io triumphe!* The dog pack did their work right well, as scent, though good, was not the wonderful, titillating, pervading bouquet we had anticipated as we came to the meeting place, and for fifty-two minutes they worked him well over road and lane, hill and vale, *not* including the fifteen or twenty minutes of his first excursion towards Kill Hill and Arthurstown.

The visitors rode hard and well. Perhaps Mr. Hamilton Stubber's Younger Son was the best stayer in the deep bits of vale and trying hills encountered to-day. But all who were not overtaken by grief and disaster had a chance of seeing to-day's run fairly well; for after Pigeon Hill, a miry lane (which with a little encouragement would rival some of the Lower Gloucestershire by-ways), and then a brace of better roads, gave beaten horses a very fair chance, and the area of pursuit was never far

from either. I should have stated that the breaking-up scene took place not more than a few fields from Castle Bagot, between which place and Bishopscourt there have been some stirring and eventful fox chases during the last few seasons, the narratives of which have appeared in the columns of *The Field*. The day was now young, very young—somewhere about three o'clock P.M., I imagine; but much has been done by horses (it is a seven-mile point from Bishopscourt to the killing point *viâ* Pigeon Hill, I hear from the geographers), and, as the assembly was called opposite the rectory of Newcastle village, or rather by its side, Mr. Mansfield put it to the field if they wished for more. Very few imitated Oliver Twist on the occasion—only those who had second horses awaiting them, or saved their first ones. Mr. Mansfield, *en roi constitutionnel*, bowed to the verdict of the majority. So a general dispersion takes place at Newcastle, whose rectory was once the residence of one of Ireland's reverend and great men (though not reverendly great or greatly reverend), Dean Swift, generally known as "the Dane." I hear the place once returned, with Gatton and Old Sarum, two members. Verily it looks now as if, when two respectable well-dressed men were delegated to cross the Channel, there would be little of the same character or class remaining there.

Mr. Graydon's dining-room presently held a festive party, "early," but not "small" by any means. Lord Clonmell's larder and cellars suffered too, considerably, from a hungry or thirsty horde of invaders. Those who left either or both hospitable houses in a state of wine were presently in a state of wine and water, as the evening deluge set in with almost unusual violence. But wet jerkins and soppy leathers are just now the badge of all our tribe. Red-coated races are just now on the *tapis*. I think Carlow takes the lead on Wednesday, the 8th; the venue, as say the lawyers, being laid near Tullow, 12st. the minimum weight, and as much over as you please! In Kildare it is proposed to make the 12st. and 14st. men ride separately,

as the latter are said to be carried on too fast by the former failing to recognise the classes. To benefit the hatters of Dublin, I would suggest white hats for the light bobs.

On Tuesday the Kildare foxes and the Kildare hares had a jubilee, for Halverstown Hill was the cynosure of *tout ce qu'il y a de plus vénatique et* "sporting" in Kildare, and, indeed, throughout Ireland. There were several masters of hounds present, some rank, and a little beauty, spite of dire menace of showers and hailstorms all through the day. The racing calls for no comment. One or two hunters tried conclusions with Curragh horses, and tried in vain—Mr. Fortescue Tynte's chestnut mare Litigation, by The Lawyer, that he was often seen on this season (sometimes *off*, I fancy, too), making perhaps the best fight, and showing most future capacity. The Jockey Hall stable was again triumphant and omnivorous, and Mr. T. Beasley was *the* winning jock of the day. The going was admirable, and perhaps few courses in the three kingdoms could have been selected more happily, in this wet period, than this light gravelly parallelogram of old turf, so well drained and so springy to the pastern. Some complained of the *smallness* of the fences. They certainly were not *hunting* fences in any sense of the term, but they were far from small, and required stretch and pace. The attraction of the afternoon was the stallion Somerset, who came over with the cachet of Capt. Machell's and Lord Calthorpe's names in his favour, as I was told. I cannot say I liked him, or think him, spite of his rich colour and compactness of frame and good intelligent head, at all likely to redeem the equine youth of this country from their asserted degeneracy. Mr. Water's meeting was, I think, a decided success in every way. The silkmercers of Dublin may peradventure cry out that their interests were not half so well attended to as at Newbridge last week, when a number of silk and satin jackets were hopelessly ruined at the preliminary brook, which the jockeys seemed to think it necessary to jump *before* the races, as well as twice or twice or thrice in each one.

I wrote about the good week's sport which the Ward Union hounds had given their followers, but, crippled by want of space, I only alluded to them. This is an outline of the three days:

On Monday they hunted their deer fast from the Poor House to Lagore, where a swollen river arrested quarry and all. Enlarging the second time, a black fallow buck, near Dunshaughlin, they had a fine run by Rosetown, Gerrardstown, and Cloverstown, to Skreen; 1 hour 30 minutes.

On Wednesday they had a good 50 minutes from Ballymadeen, by Somerville to Rathburgh Chapel.

On Saturday "Moynalvy," enlarged near the Flat House, ran straight and well through storm and rain for 55 minutes; passing the Fairy House and Ballymore, he made Cabin Hill and the Reesk, and in a couple of miles was at Kilbrew River, where an A.D.C. on a chestnut put on steam and got over cleverly; three or four more swam or scrambled over. The rest, as in the nursery rhyme, they ran away; so did the stag and the hounds and this little water-jumping lot, who alone saw the capture, which took place fifteen minutes afterwards by a police barrack; ten miles, I hear, was the distance covered.

I have frequently this season sent you accounts of good high-class sport from the lands of the United Hunt committee, who now fill Lord Shannon's place in Southern Cork. Union reigns there, I believe, literally as well as titularly; not so in Northern Cork, where *divisum imperium cum Jove Cæsar habet*, which freely translated may run somewhat thus:

> Divided counsels here prevail,
> Duhallow *versus* Doneraile.

'Tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true—a sentiment which all lovers of sport will, I am full sure, echo with sincerest regret; but it is not my province to criticise the proceedings, manifestoes, and measures of the "claimants," even were I capable of doing so. It may be that one side has clung too tena-

ciously to the rights of property in possession, while the other may have been somewhat oblivious of good service done to the hunting state at a very critical period of its existence; but I may speak of what I have witnessed, and testify of that which I have myself mingled in, and can here assure my readers that, though Lord Doneraile's "fields" may be much smaller than they might be under different conditions—a fact I cannot gainsay or controvert—they presented a far livelier aspect when I saw them last than the picture drawn by your recent correspondent would convey; while as a matter of fact I can recollect three or four meets of very popular, admirably turned-out packs, when the congregation hardly exceeded Dean Swift's well-known duo. The 29th of February was a case in point. Finding a fox in Bonas scrub, Lord Doneraile's hounds sent him along at what I gather was great pace for 45 minutes, and broke him up within twenty yards of an earth in Ballybeg, which, being *Duhallow* territory, was open. The second fox was found in Hazlewood, a very fine covert of mixed character—laurel, young plantation, woodland, and gorse proper. I hear they ran him for 32 minutes at about top speed, and rolled him over in the open: not a very bad day's sport. And it must be a very self-denying ordinance, I think, which prevents more from enjoying such good phases of hunting; a few did most consumedly.

March blew itself into existence in most leonine fashion, but his early face was like Shakespeare's schoolboy's—shining. The air was in the lowlands warm and relaxing, and the sun's rays were perceptible to more than one sense. The Kildare hounds met at Saggart or Tassaggard, a semi-mountainous village some eight or nine miles from Dublin. A pack of hounds were once kept here by Mr. Wade at Ashtree Cottage, but a fine paper mill, with good water power, is now the principal object in the district, and no doubt the most useful. Near as the fixture was to Dublin, and convenient for many of the Dale and Vale men, it

was sparsely attended, as experience has taught them that as a rule Saggard and mountain draws are synonymous terms, and in these coughing and influenza times it is a serious matter to linger on the bleak slopes of these wind-swept hills for probably several hours. *Le bonheur de l'imprévu* was never better illustrated, nor the glorious uncertainty of foxhunting more aptly exemplified, than to-day—the result being a hunting run so good and decided, that one or two many season-hunters declared it to be the best they had ever seen. Allowing a margin for the warmth of a glowing enthusiasm as yet unevaporated, it certainly takes rank among the fine runs of the season—my individual regret being, that, not having come out till late in the day, I saw not a mile of of it, and that a very imperfect knowledge of these hunting grounds will not permit me to do topographic justice to its merits. I suppose it was about noon when a fox was found in Tallaght Gorse; his first impulse was towards Brittas, mountainwards; but the hounds managed to press him hard, till he turned valewards, and ran in view for some time over the lower grass fields which the Belgard foxes used to take us over so frequently. Following this line, he treated the field to a nice gallop over a corner of the Tallaght racecourse, so popular in by-gone days, on by the edge of Friarstown, not breasting the hill, but keeping a nice level track, which, I hear, rode far better than the more holding vale. The Dodder is presently crossed, the fox having run along the banks for some distance. After passing Jobstown he had got into a drain or culvert by the roadside, but was soon ousted from this lurking place—and, indeed, I hear that this pause in the proceedings was the sole check that occurred, as the hounds never wanted casting, but did everything themselves, being entirely by themselves, Major the Hon. E. Lawless having the nighest position. Glenasmuil Lodge (a shooting box of Mr. Cobbe's) is now neared, and the soil becomes more peaty. The fox has hidden himself among some rocks or stones; when dislodged he was among the pack—the bitches—who had earned

him well; the time was 1 hour 32 minutes. Of the distance covered I cannot speak, but it must have been considerable, as hounds were running continuously without a break. Among the visitors were the Hon. E. Boscawen, Lord Berehaven, Mr. Pepys, and Mr. M'Ildowney, who was once a household word in Kildare, where he brought his horses for several seasons.

The afternoon set in with hail showers, some of the stones in these high latitudes being as large as marrowfat peas; consequently, there was no scent to hunt a fox that turned up in the Blackchurch plantations of Johnstown Kennedy. No one, I think, who has not climbed these hills of to-day's exploration can have an adequate idea of the magnificent extent of the hunting grounds of Dublin, Meath, and Kildare.

Another good run from Carlow, though not equal to the last I recorded from there. Meeting at Oak Park, Col. Bruen's fine residence, they found foxes abounding there, but had little sport with them; so they went on to Pollarton Gorse, a covert of Sir Charles Burton's, and a sure find. It proved so to-day, though most thought that the fox that issued from it was a lodger, not an occupier, as he set his head straight for Burton Hall, running across the lower end of the park, but keeping strangely clear of the upper coverts; thence he raced along over a deep holding line of grass towards Knockroe, turning at the end of thirty-five minutes for Castle Dermot fox covert, and here there was a slight check on the road; three men with the pack up to this, Messrs Watson, Rochfort, and Bunbury. Eventually he got to ground in Castle Dermot covert; fifty minutes in all. No one wanted the master to draw on, though it was but two o'clock.

On the 1st Mr. Cosby had a very good thing from Derryfore, the fox pointing for Cullenagh, thence to Lennon's Gorse, round it, and over the Timahoe Road by Fossy, over Capt. Cosby's heathery mountain into Kilbride's Glen, which ended the best part of the pursuit, storms killing scent afterwards; 1 hour 15 minutes in all.

Friday, the 3rd inst., looked in the early morning as if it would be what the sailors call a dirty day, but a tremendous gale from the westward kept off the impending volume of water, and we were quits for a few light showers. The Kildare hounds went down by train to Athy, the meet being fixed for noon. Sawyer's Wood, which has proved very steadfast in its holding powers this season, turned out a good smart fox, who set his head towards Devies, then bent upwards a little, and won his way to the Moat of Ardskull. After twenty-five minutes, of which fifteen were very good—the last stage of the riding having been spoilt by wire—scent at last seemed to die away here, or to be blown clean off the earth. From Nine-tree Hill a fox was taken along merrily into Narraghmore Wood, thence through the laurel screens, and by the church towards the court house and the village, when once more scent seemed totally suspended.

In Wexford the storms have almost vetoed hunting—completely so on the 21st, when the meet was at the kennels. On the 23rd, after drawing three good coverts blank in a gale of wind, they found the object of their search in a small patch of gorse near Tintern Abbey, and hunted him freely for twenty-seven minutes till he found a refuge under the light house at Duncannon. On the following Friday they met in storm at Castleboro', Lord Carew's fine park, and again drew two coverts blank, till a fox turned up in a small spinney, who ran through Ballinavarry very fast, getting to ground opposite Wilton Castle. A second fox was found in the park wood, but a thunderstorm was all in his favour. On the 28th they met at Oulart, drew it blank, but had lots of hunting with a trio of foxes at Dranagh, who occupied the hounds for an hour and a half. Wells held a stouter sort of fox, who faced the open and the gale, and gave a long ring of forty-three minutes *viâ* Oulart.

From the low-lying valley of the Barrow, where the Kildare hounds were exercising the foxes yesterday, to the lighter and loftier hunting grounds of the Queen's County, is but a step,

A league, but barely twa,

in the language of the old Scotch ballad. So, following my Zingari proclivities, I took the step, and found myself on Saturday morning in front of a *quasi*-farm, *quasi*-manorhouse, known, I believe, as Corbally, one of a small group of four or five red-coats, and as many black, while the Queen's County hounds are being walked about up and down the lawn, under the tutelage of Snaith, Tom M'Allister, etc. The hounds—the bitch pack, with two or three smaller dog hounds among them—look very light, as if the good sport and long distances they had been going lately had told their tale on them. Snaith is admirably mounted on the Palmer—the Grey Palmer we may call him—the embodiment of all those good qualities, modified by several seasons' experience and much natural and acquired sagacity, which we desiderate in a huntsman's horse. He has lots of bone and substance, and it is evident that Snaith has two stone in hand at the least. Tom M'Allister is riding Ida, a very wiry, good-looking daughter of Claret, that is also up to far more than he rides. George Roseblade, the second whip, is on a strong General Hess filly, that will probably grow into a huntress after a season's experience. Those familiar with the *ensemble* of the Queen's County hounds know that Newton, the stud groom at the hall, turns out his horses in the highest health and condition (condition which is often severely tested by the return of his charges to their boxes towards the smaller hours when they have come in for a good thing in the Ossory country), while the fact of Capt. Cosby presiding over the fortunes of this pack is sure warranty that the hunt servants will be the quintessence of neatness, and that every minutia of detail will be simply perfect. Presently up drives the master—a stepper, of course, in the cart—and he is very soon on the back of Swordsman, a fine, strong, dark chestnut horse, who has gained the judge's verdict in the ring, but has gained far better and more enduring laurels in the hunting field, and is really too good a performer for the sawdust arena. It is a very small field, considering that the forenoon is

fine and dry, though piercingly cold, and inaugurated with snow showers in the early morning hours. There are one or two Kildare men out, including Mr. Cassidy, who is always well mounted. Mr. Dunne is riding a weight-carrier of power; Capt. Trench is on a good sort of brown bay horse; Mr. Moore, of Cremorgan, rides a light chestnut; Mr. Dunne, of Ballymanus, is sure to be on a fast one, if blood be any criterion; Capt. Webber is on a rare old Kildare hunter, Dublin, clever as a septuagenarian and fresh as a four-year old. Col. Carden, the ex-M.F.H. of this pack, joins us later on a clever bay mare, always to the front, though seemingly much under his size and weight. I believe a popular Kilkenny meet at Freshford, and another with the Carlow hounds to-day, had depleted Mr. Cosby's numbers very considerably. A quarter of an hour is given as law to the tardy and distant comers; but such there were not apparently, for our numbers were not swelled by fresh arrivals. We are presently trotting through green pasture fields till we reach Coolrusk, a secluded gorse on a hill slope, rather straggling and hollow, but said to be never-failing. Owing to this reputation, it was drawn most carefully, and quartered like a turnip field; but it was not true to its fame to-day, for a stale drag, acknowledged by a few hounds, was all the outcome. A sunny glen, Corbally by name, gorsed on one side, clothed in thick-matted brambles and larch and fir trees on the opposite bank, next visited, gave us the same negative result. Another glen, known as Kilbride's, which we drew for about half a mile from the vale upwards, was also blank. Hereabouts was the home of Duc-an-Durrhas, and more than one good Irish horse besides him; and here a hospitable half-way house, Mr. Kilbride's, was thrown open to the cold, hungry, and thirsty.

> Bad luck to the country! the clock had struck one,
> No foxes yet found, no hunting begun!

to parody the better verse of the Cheshire bard. After Kilbride's Glen, the next visit was made to Orchard Gorse, a snuggery whence

we overlooked the pretty little hippodrome of the same name, with its bare stand and natural amphitheatre. The bitches feather away below us, and all are at attention, but nothing comes of it (I believe a vixen had been recently moved out of it, and was on a sunny bank or hedgerow close by all the time, as she was viewed away). This is the sinister side of foxhunting certainly, and little now remains but woodland, which Captain Cosby wants to eschew to-day if possible. Higher up the mountain side are two coombes, very thick and very matted, and through them flow the two *natural* brooks which are such a pleasant feature in the Orchard races. One is partially drawn; and part of the field, now a little impatient perhaps and cold, move on to the second, anticipating the advent of the pack. But as they look back they see red men and black men hurrying in hot haste, with their horses' heads pointing valewards. We can join them probably at Orchard Gorse by cutting across country sharp, and making the base of the triangle whose sides they are riding, if there be only a minute or two's delay in covert. We did so, and the result was satisfactory. I hear a hard-riding farmer, in taking a fence, which he fell at, actually found himself on the top of the fox as he was slipping away from Orchard Gorse; and, as I know a good welter who actually killed a fox in jumping a fence—a fresh one too—the story is not only likely enough in itself, but, from the source it came from, I am sure it may be assumed to be authentic. But the pack are now racing him over some very poached pasture land, scent most serving, and the "joli parfumier" not far in front of them. Our way for some distance was along a muddy lane-way, something like the old fosse roads one encounters in parts of England. Through this we ploughed and plodded and squelched till we got to Kilbride's Glen; down this the fox takes us for a bit, and then crosses the rivulet, which we do for our own parts not without delay and some difficulty; then the line for a few fields leads us over lovely grass fields and a few flying fences till we reach a road whose termini I know not, though it presently goes by the pretty

little village of Luggacurran—which, with its well-built houses and good farm homesteads in the vicinity, is not a bad little capital to this portion of Lord Lansdowne's improved and improving Queen's County estates. There is no delay on the road —not a moment's; but the line is now over a ploughed field, almost the only one apparent in many hundreds of acres of grass area, and pace slackens visibly. Clapook Gorse with its earths are within an inviting mile or so on the left, but our fox has determined his point, and it is not Clapook; so we wind round the shoulder of a hill, known, I believe, as "the white rock," from the fantastic shapes which the limestone outcrop here assumes. All the field are riding up to the motto and cognizance of their captain and master, *Audaces fortuna juvat* (*timidosque repellit*, but there were no cravens or funkers to be seen). Stone-faced banks and low ragged walls form the boundaries in this district. Another hill, covered with a low growth of scrub hazel and light springy turf, known, I believe, as Cranagh-a-Tully, is left behind us, and our fox, who has been very sharply pressed for several miles—part of which has been in the teeth of a gale which tested your hat halyards considerably—is now on vantage ground, for he has gained a very dense hazel scrub on the corner of the Banker Hill, which looks as thick as tropical "bush;" and the hill-slope, stony and poor of soil, does not look as if it would carry much scent. The hounds, however, are very near him, and tell us so clamorously, as their music reaches the ridge from which we watch the fortunes of the chase. Then he goes out of the scrub, the crows very attentive to his passage and proceedings as he crosses a small field, jumps a wall or two, and is presently at the far side of the Carlow Road. A very short interval here separates us from a large woodland of Captain Cosby's—Katta Foley (a corruption, I believe, of Catherine Foley). Through this the pack pushed their fox along gallantly, driving him over the Athy Road into a finely timbered hill, part of Ballykilcavan, Sir Allan Walsh's park. Round this hill the hounds hunted him, scent slackening

much among the brackens, till he ran out once more, as we surmise, on to the Athy Road; and here we lost his track completely, and could not account for him. The hounds had deserved him well; but, on the other hand, no fox merited a reprieve better. He had given us a beautiful line, had covered eight or nine miles Irish, and had faced for some distance a storm which would have appalled anything less stout of heart than himself.

On this day the Kildare hounds met at Maynooth, and had, I hear, a very short run to ground from Taghadoe, and then took a fox from Castletown along the Rye till he swam the canal, and only those few who had providently gone on beforehand to the two bridges saw the pursuit thence to Ballymacoll, when a check let the field up; thence there was the beginning of a lovely run towards Collierstown, when something turned the fox back by Ham Wood, after which point the hunt was uninteresting.

A longer step it is than Friday's from the Queen's County hunting fields to the Kildare area of pursuit on Monday, the 16th inst.—the Hill of Allen, a melancholy looking furze-clad wart, which rises abrupt out of a wide level of mere, swamp, and red bog. The step, too, was not a pleasant one, as it brought one over the Barrow Vale, now in high flood, and like a large lake, over which the road passes at a height of not more than a foot or two in places. The day was a semi-tornado from the south-west, mitigated at intervals by sharp showers. There was little or no sport, though foxes abounded, turning up in twos and fours, at the Hill of Allen, at Lord Valentia's Gorse of Boston in Dunmurry, where one was killed, and in the Curragh. Mr. Medlicot was the acting M.F.H. of the day (Mr. Mansfield having had a sprain), as well as enacting the part of kind and hospitable host at his residence. Among the severer casualties of the month was an accident which befel Col. Stewart of the Bays, on Saturday, by which he dislocated his shoulder, when hunting with the Newbridge harriers.

There have been a very few brilliant passages in Galway recently. Thus Mr. Persse had a capital thirty-five minutes from Currofin Gorse on the 15th ult., which a waterspout terminated. When the sky was clear once more, Mr. Persse drew Crumlin successfully, and had a very good forty-five minutes from it, killing in the open. On the 19th he had 1 hour 20 minutes from Cregmore, killing in the open also, the first fifty minutes at best pace, till they ran to a gorse, from which they rather slipped their field and got away alone. On the 28th, a very fast half-hour from Vermont to Mount Bellew. On the 2nd inst. they took a fox from Chesterfield Gorse, through Kill Wood and across the broad pastures of Claremadden, crossing the well-known river (which some, after this run, know better), on still at best pace through Raven and Skyers to Gortnamona, and thence to Lakefield, where the hounds were nonplussed, after a splendid chase of 1 hour 20 minutes, of which many horses were unable to see the end, the first fifty minutes having been a race.

The Meath chronicle is not so interesting as usual this week, storms of wind and rain having told on scent severely. On the 29th they met at Philpotstown, and ran from there to Meadestown; from Moyagher they had a nice gallop through Power's farm into Balrath, and some hunting afterwards from the hill of Faughan towards Ardbraccan. On the 2nd they met at Drewstown, and had a ring from Gilstown, and thence to Athboy Lodge. On the 3rd, meeting at Garlow Cross, they found a plague of foxes between Bellinter and Drewstown—an infliction, to which, however, a master may resign himself without much effort. On the 4th they met at Archerstown, and found at Kilgar; a second turned up on Knockrath Hill, and ran towards Loughcrew; while a third was taken from a bit of gorse near Virginia Station to Woodpole, Ballyhest, and Sylvan Park, but hounds had divided.

March 18*th*, 1876.

Non possidentem multa vocaveris
Recte beatum. Rectius occupat
Nomen beati, etc. *Horace.*

The man with many hunters curs'd,
Is rarely placed among the first;
More bless'd the "Unitarian," who
Pricks to the front upon his screw.

Those whose slumbers were light, or whose habits were early and exemplary (why is the *diluculo surgere saluberrimum*, the first bit of Latinity we learn in adolescence, so universally ignored by adult and mature age?) saw a surcoat of snow covering the face of the earth on Tuesday morning, the 7th inst.; it was light and flaky, however, and did not hang about for more than a couple of hours, subsiding gradually into the surcharged and poached soil. By 11 A.M., however, the fields were once more pranked out in green, all the more vivid and glistening for its recent cold embrace; but the leaguer of snow was all around us eastwards, and every vein and nerve and pulse acknowledged the frigid proximity. The Kildare hounds met at Naas on this eventful day, and, though we read that time and train (or was it tide?) wait for no man, or woman either, Mr. Mansfield, nevertheless, waited with much courtesy for all the county and metropolitan railway advents, and gave every hunter lots of time to get leisurely out of his box at Sallins, and join the parade in the main street, which does duty also for market-place, and is a general rendezvous what time the judges of assize and their legal posse, the chairman of quarter sessions and their lesser lights, fairs, county meetings, etc., make Naas the centre and cynosure for squire and farmer, professional and proletarian, alike. Naas is ancient, but not fish-like, as Trinculo might have said; for, though not as clean as it might be, a fine water supply, several lively brooks, and a branch of the Grand Canal have done much to purify and deodorise it. It has some good shops, more than

one bank, and a most thriving local trade; but certainly, as a hunting capital of a great country, it is very much below par, even taking the Irish standard for our guide.

To the antiquarian, however, Naas is most interesting, for it is an epitome in bad brick and mortar of Irish history since the conquest; and I have no doubt many of the successive steps and stages of past events and revolutions may be traced, however feebly, in these permanent characters. The kings of Leinster, so says history, lived here with their traditionary harmony of harp and temper. When they were *expaled* (not expelled), Naas was strongly fortified, and, as monks and mail always went together, various orders established themselves here *en permanence.* Cormuck O'Conor and Roderick O'Moore burnt it, or part of it, in 1577. Cromwell's captains took it for the Commonwealth, and the rebels in 1798 vainly essayed to do the like. Races were held here, and lasted for five consecutive days, long before Punchestown felt the Saxon invasion. Few inland small towns in Ireland have, in fact, felt the pulsations of the great and stirring events around them more sympathetically than Naas. The presence of a depôt battalion has done much good of late years; but if a Saxon or Celtic Haussmann were to do a good bit of demolishing and rebuilding, specially in the way of hunting facilities, he would be a benefactor to the equine race, and in a minor degree to the human.

The sun is gleaming brightly, but radiating no heat, as we are set in motion past the infantry barracks and the lugubrious-looking gaol towards the Newbridge Road. Presently we turn in, and are among very wide pasture fields; and a series of gaps leads the array to a sort of knoll on one of those fields which bounds the gorse of Osberstown on the north-western side. I do not know why the master, Mr. Mansfield, drew it from this position; but, if it was to give the fox we expected to find a chance of running over an open line, and keeping clear of the railway, the great southern and western track, and eschewing

the canals, viaducts, and the river Liffey, which are within half a mile or so—a mile at most—of the gorse on the northern side, the judgment was good enough for the great legal lord of that name; and we soon learnt its wisdom in the beneficial consequences. In ten minutes from the time the last horse had cantered over the green sward leading up to the commanding hillock, caps were raised, and the stampede was commencing. Our fox's first point seemed the town of Naas itself, not half a mile distant, and his mask was set fair for the Green Rath, which was said to have been a rural St. Stephen's for the Celts (their posterity built something far more imposing on College Green); but, as this line would not do, he shifted his course a few points to the starboard (right), crossed the Newbridge Road, and presently fifteen couple of hounds' heads were seen in the canal all together—all in a second or two topping the bank and shaking themselves simultaneously; the other three couple were separated from them by a very short interval. This was just under the gaunt ruins of Jigginstown. On the Newbridge Road there was some slight delay, owing to the enormous body of horsemen having got in front of the swimming pack, and having foiled the road grievously. An open and inviting gate by Jigginstown leads into a tract of green fields much wired up, 'tis true, but practicable in many places. A crowd plunge into the trap, and are *en route* for Rathasker, its castle, grove, and earths—which is the usual run of foxes from Osberstown—before they discover the real state of affairs, which was this: Very patiently did the bitches pick out their fox track across the road. It led to the left of Jigginstown, over some small enclosures, past the barracks I noticed before, past the old southern mailcoach road, down a valley with its brook, and up the far slope, thence through a corner of Cradoxtown lands, past Mr. Doyle's farm and across the Blessington Road, over those holding marshes divided by a double, big and not very sound, and so on to the little grove known as Tipper, which used in old times to be a very sure find;

on by its corner over a single bank with a very wide and deepish drop; then it plunges into more green fields, followed by a bit of most holding plough. Beggar's End, the corner smithy so well known to all Punchestown goers, is passed to the right. Forenaghts well on the left; past the telegraph posts of the Blessginton Road, and so on slowly enough to Eadestown, for the glory of pursuit had terminated at or near Tipper, where there was a check of some moments. A snow and sleet shower now came down with provoking fierceness. Most men were fain to find shelter at any corner or penthouse or corn stack; and, indeed, it was probably this storm in the air which arrested the very fast and furious career of the ladies a few minutes ago. Who got off well with the pack? who stayed with them? Of all this I can say nothing; but, having been myself in the seat of the tailors and in the ranks of the laggarts, I can aver that in the early stage of the gallop I saw a grey horse and a red man well in the van, but I was not near enough even to attempt identification. In the first part of this run the road was decidedly the best and quickest track, and those who followed it, and nicked in presently, were fortunate. But the shower over, and the asperity of the weather a little mitigated, we are assembled at one side of Eadestown in a high grass field, while the pack are tumultuously rapturous in the gorse below. The hunted fox is naturally way-worn and stiffened, and not desirous of again trying conclusions with his pursuers after his escape; but there are one or two more to the good in this little gorse. A gentleman in black (not Mr. Jenkin's) has wandered a little from the regulation ground; the fox has broken, seen him, and turned back. The spokesmen of the field incontinently bless him in the undiluted Saxon of indignation, but in reality he perhaps has done us a service, for presently the fox emerges at an opposite angle; he points for Punchestown first, then with a mountain impulse he soon crosses the Ballymore Eustace Road, and races across a few very large grass fields, dipping down presently into the narrow valley below with its

brooklet, and then sailing away over grass and plough up the hill-side. The pace has been good up to this. At a field of young grass the pack flashed over the line, and caused a momentary delay; but it is soon righted, and the hounds are now turning their backs on Slieve Rhue, and taking their fox into Glen Ding, while the field have no alternative—for the descent is too precipitous anywhere to the right—but to avail themselves of a couple of bridle gates, and so climb up the grassy slopes which lead into Downshire Park. Of this park, with its hills and hollows and almost precipitous pitches, I have before written; suffice it to say that most of those who now entered its walls and portals left hope behind—the hope at least of sharing the fortunes of the victorious pack. Some thought the fox had gone on to the Old Gorse, now truncated. Some took one hill for an eyrie, others an opposite one. Those who remained on the road, if any did so, were masters of the situation. *Medio tutissimus ibis* was never better illustrated. The descent to the road from either side was very abrupt. If you went through the park, a bit of soppy plough confronted you, which was almost tantamount to bogtrotting; while the staid and sober tenant of the road could see the pack emerging from Glen Ding and the Downshire, and sailing onwards over the Liffey valley till they reached Baltiboys. At this point I was informed that the field had diminished to a single horseman in black — not, of course, counting the quidnuncs, who rode after everything to learn the fortune of the field. I was told that the solitary pursuer who accompanied the pack out of this modern Thermopylæ was the Baron de Robeck, and the report is so probable that I repeat it.

> Of the three hundred grant but three,
> To make a new Thermopylæ.

This very fine run—extraordinarily good, and *multâ cretâ notanda* if foxes were not changed at Eadestown—terminated in a drain

by Baltiboys House. Elverstown Gorse was tried on the return kennelwards, and produced, after some investigation, a smart fox, who ran much the same line as he himself, or his predecessor, took from the same covert six weeks earlier in the season, doing the distance to Bishopsland handsomely in fifteen minutes. Punchestown Gorse was on the day's card for drawing; but there was neither light, time, nor power left in horses, to pay it a visit. Falls abounded to-day, among the prone being two of the keenest of the veterans, Sir J. Higginson and Mr. Horace Rochfort; but both were unhurt. Mr. Hugh Henry, unfortunately, put out his shoulder early in the fray.

I have just illustrated (how imperfectly I am fully aware) one side of the medal which we may take to represent the kingly sport in Ireland. It was the sunny side on the whole, though much menaced by snow and hail and storm in the air; still scent triumphed, and the outcome was a remarkably good day's sport, over lines none the worse for being slightly old-fashioned, though of recent seasons they had fallen into desuetude, and likely to serve as a text for those who take their stand against the asserted degeneracy and want of staying power in the modern-bred fox. The next day may exemplify the reverse of the numismatic picture—the glorious uncertainty, and all the rest of it, with regard to foxhunting. Much moved by the flagrant accounts and glowing pictures of hounds and their doings in Westmeath, I put myself on Wednesday morning, the 8th inst., on board a *petite vitesse convoi* of the Great Midland and Western line, which leaves the Broadstone terminus in Dublin at 9 A.M., and reaches Mullingar about eleven o'clock; so that as the county pack were to rendezvous at the station of that midland capital at the self-same hour, there could be no fairer or handier occasion of assisting at a great Westmeath hunting function than the present, with the possibility, too, of returning to the capital before midnight, which distant hunting expeditions in Ireland do not always permit. A fine cheery morning, it

became suddenly overcast, and for the two hours of travel it rained as if the fountains of some great deep had been loosed. This was the more provoking because the great artery of the Irish railway system flows, leisurely and somewhat sluggishly indeed, through as beautiful hunting grounds as the eye of man often ranges over, and the metals have played an important part in many a hot pursuit through these green wildernesses, be the quarry fox, deer, or hare. Such pleasant reminiscences of travel were denied us to-day, as the rain storms, unintermittent in violence, completely spoilt the outlook by narrowing the horizon to a very few yards. The violent is seldom permanent; but when we were injected into Mullingar station the paroxysms of rain were passionate and fierce as ever. No hounds or hunt servants were to be seen, and a few waterproofed pursuers, who seemed to have no notion of trying the efficacy of their Cordings or Edmistons, was the sole indication that a meet at this point had been announced with all the purpose and deliberation of printer's ink and the wings of the press. "Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte" is as true of facing a rain-storm as anything else, and a minute or two brought me into the main thoroughfare of this rich county town, where *arms*, '*limbs*,' and I know not what else soon informed me that Lord Greville was the lord paramount of Mullingar. A slight cessation of the heaviest part of the rain brought out the master, Mr. Reynell, Matthews the huntsman, and Goodall and Fulton his acolytes, from some temporary shelter; and now we are trotting along Main Street, or the 'High,' or whatever Mullingar parade ground calls itself, surveying eighteen couple of mixed dogs and bitches, with few exceptions a nice even, level lot, and in fair lusty condition, considering the season and the work they have done. Everyone seems to agree that Mr. Tailby's draft of bitches has improved the character of the pack, and a similar unanimity of popular opinion seems to prevail as to the manner in which Matthews brings them into the hunting field, and handles them when there.

We are trotting on westwards of Mullingar, past the old race-course with its gaunt-looking stand, having left the capacious infantry barracks behind on our right. But where is the field? *Imprimis*, where are the soldier officers? Has Longford no troops of otiose cavalry? Athlone no garrison representing all arms of the service? are not the Buffs now stationed in Mullingar, in these very barracks we have been passing by? I cannot answer all these questions. Possibly in these days of intense intellectuality every officer has been invited to write a pamphlet on the Eastern question, give his views in writing on the differential calculus, or invent a new Kriegsspiel! I do not know who are at Athlone or Longford; but I am quite sure that the Buffs would have been seen in to-day's convenient hunting field, had it not been that the regiment has been 'suspended' under orders for foreign service, which means a non-hunting dispensatiou.

At this particular period of the day the field consisted of a quartette, including the M.F.H.; but two of this little sporting corporation and their hunters are fitting representatives of a county which grows bone and sinew, human and equine, on as grand a scale as any land I wot of short of Patagonia, to which my wandering footsteps never led me. Let me introduce them and their mounts. "Who banks broad pieces should himself be broad," and Mr. Kelly, the first I shall attempt to limn, is very broad of back and substantial of mould, as becomes a banker and a pillar of Hibernian credit; 19st. 5lb., or 7lb., I forget which, is the modest weight that, *without* a corresponding saddle, he invites his hunter to carry. And when I add that he makes his horses gallop fast and jump big, and that the country he rides over is neither light nor weakly fenced (good pasture land seldom is either), it will be understood that his knack or talent for selection is a very happy art. The second figure is that of Capt. Malone, late of the 12th Lancers, and it embodies the very reverse of Euclid's definition of a line; for he

combines great breadth and great length too, and the result is somewhere about 17st. or 18st. in the saddle. Mr. Kelly is riding a somewhat slack-backed son of Arbutha's, with a very good forehand, and a rare mover in all paces. Mr. Malone is on a smaller horse, but of immense substance and great propelling power, said to be very fast, even among light weights, and for his jumping capacity I can myself vouch from the sample I saw.

We are now by a corner of Lake Belvidere, which seems in great commotion, white horses riding tumultuously over its usually placid and serene surface. Before us, in the angle between the woodlands of Rochfort and Ladystown is a wide area of peat moss and swamp, the home of ducks and wild-fowl, intersected by sluggish rivers and deep bog drains, which the gunner finds it no easy task to cross; near the lake, and bounded by one of these almost impassable drains, is the fox covert of Kilpatrick, which I hear has never been visited in vain this year. Our suspense was strained for a good many minutes; but to-day seemed to be about to mark the exception when, borne faintly on the storm, come the strains of hound music as we wait in all patience on one of the causeways skirting the bit of morass; in a few seconds afterwards a good-looking yellow fox careers over the swampy ground, crosses the road, and, continuing his course to the railway, leaves us in hopes of a gallop to Tullaghan, or it may be to the Crooked Wood! The hounds work up to him slowly, and he has full five minutes to the good, when they too cross the road, and are hunting his trail on to the metals. Here vanished our hopes; between the canal and the line existed a breeding earth, which should have been stopped, but was not, and so ends the history of this fox chase.

Ladystown Woods produced nothing better than a stale drag, Rochfort not even that small mercy, and the drawing of these wide woodlands by the lake shores cut sadly into our already

curtailed day. By this time the rain had ceased, and some score or more of sportsmen and sportswomen came out to see the fortune of afternoon and evening—among them some young ladies driving an extremely neat Canadian pony. The next scene is in front of a handsome mansion, modern in outline, but I believe of some antiquity, which is the residence of Col. Cooper, late of the 7th Fusiliers, to which he bade a field of considerably increased proportions the heartiest of welcomes. Among the guests was Major Dease, the late master of this pack, over which he presided so ably and successfully for well-nigh a decade. That 'tall' riding would have resulted from Col. Cooper's good things, edible and potable, and his solicitations "to top up with a liqueur of some sort"—*e pluribus unum*, like the American bird's cognizance—had a quick twenty-five minutes with a flying fox been vouchsafed to a pack during the next hour, I make no doubt, even though no sportsmen exchanged hunters, as I have heard of occurring under the influence of similar 'meridians.' Our progress is now through fine wide grass fields, enclosed with walls more or less high, whose larking facilities tempt light and heavy alike; and now we are at Gaybrook, a large, comfortable-looking mansion—Mr. Smyth's—the home of good foxes, and the starting point of several good runs this season, more than one of which has, if I recollect aright, found its way into your columns. The home woods and shrubberies are empty of fox life, but at the far side of a road is a thicket of Scotch fir, laurel, and rhododendron, with a good deal of heather through it, which held a leash. The aim of the hunting staff was, if possible, to make our fox break in the direction of Catherinestown, fine, sound land, the best of going, with probably a run of three or four miles in prospect, and so prevent his running to the nigher haven of Gaulston Park, Lord Kilmaine's residence, not much more than a mile distant. The fox did much what was desired, but was headed just as he was advancing beautifully into the wished-for area, and after

Vincent Brooks, Day & Son, Lith

"CAN'T HOLD HIM HERE I GO IN OR OVER"

much pushing, cheering, and hallooing another or the same one was induced to break over the line by which we approached Gaybrook. Skirting Simonstown Wood, Mr. Rochfort Boyd's property, I believe, scent was very catchy, and our progress over this fine grass land was slow enough, and after running a ring, though far from a round one, towards Gaybrook, we had to abandon this fox. Mr. Joly, the hon. sec. to the hunt, had a stirrup-cup for passing fox hunters. So ends the story of a journey to Westmeath in quest of sport—the elements were all there, save the driving power of scent. Next morning snow showed on the roofs of the houses in the metropolis, and the ground was hard from frost; but, nothing doubting, and full of faith in March, I set out to join the Kildare hounds at Narraghmore Courthouse. Alas! snow of some little depth covered all the hunting plains and hills. *Par conséquence*, the hounds were unable to leave their kennels, much less hunt.

Scent has for some time almost deserted Limerick; but on the 3rd instant there was a temporary revival of the old form, *veteris vestigia flammæ.* The day was stormy in the extreme; but the fox found by Sir David Roche's pack in Pinder's Wood, boldly faced it, making his point good into a rocky fissure, after an unchecked gallop of five miles, very fast, and over walls. Castle Hewson gave them a second good gallop, which also terminated in rock or stony cleft; for no vigilance on the part of earthstoppers can protect all these casual entrances and hiding places.

The Ward Union hounds have already scored two good gallops this week; the first on Monday, when 'Lady Domville, enlarged near Culmullen, ran a nice line by Grange, Galtrim, and Trotter's Gorse to Adamstown. The field were imprisoned for some time by wire behind a river in this pursuit. The second was on Wednesday, when 'The Earl,' set free near the Flat House, ran by the Mayne to Hollywood, over the Ward River by Ballymacarrig to the Wooton, when he was secured. Jem Brindley was, I hear, the leading figure in pursuit.

The Carlow redcoat race came off at Castlemore, near Tullow, in rain and storm on Wednesday, and was won by Sir Clement Wolsely's Arab, Placid Joe, whom I wrote about recently in a border run, gaining second place. A sporting farmers' race followed, which Nellie secured for her owner, Mr. Balding. This was an inaugural redcoat race in Carlow, so the machinery did not naturally run as smooth as it probably will after a couple of years' experience and practice; but victors and vanquished alike are unanimous in praising the selection of the course, an old-fashioned strongly-fenced one, and very heavy from the recent rains. Sir Clement Wolseley's win was a very popular one. He lives near the arena, and his tenants were all there to congratulate him. It should also be mentioned that in this race the horses were all ridden by their owners, some of whom scaled considerably more than the minimum limit of 12 stone.

I hear Lord Doneraile's hounds had a good day in the Ballyhooly Woods on Tuesday last, killing two foxes, and running a third to ground.

In a recent letter I alluded to a meet of the Meath hounds at Woodlands—Lord Annally's Park—an eminently spectacular gathering. Abbottstown—Mr. Ion Trant Hamilton's home, about equi-distant from Dublin—was little less so on the forenoon of the 10th inst., on the occasion of a visit from the same fine pack. Nearly every word I wrote about the *coup d'œil* at Woodlands is equally applicable to Abbottstown, the civic, military, and professional castes of Dublin being all very equitant and saltant on that day; besides them might be seen strong reinforcements of pursuers from the neighbouring shires of Meath, Dublin, Kildare, and a few remoter counties. The day, considering the elemental war to which we have recently been the victims, was really a halcyon day; and, though an eager and a nipping air spoke of snow and frost very slightly removed, the arch of heaven was clear. Rain, snow, and sleet forebore to fall for

several hours; and if her Gracious Majesty can delegate her imputed gift of bringing fine weather in the train of the *al fresco* pageants she graces and honours with her presence to her chief officers of state, the viceregal *cortége* exercised it as the stately quartette of browns in the Duke of Abercorn's barouche, with their outriders, paraded in front of the house, and kept in view of the hounds as they drew the home woods. Let the *Court Journal* duly chronicle the array of beauty and fashion that was equitant (by-and-by saltant) on the lawn of Abbottstown; *Davus sum, non Œdipus*—I am Triviator, not Jeames de la Pluche. But, passing by many stars in the well-amazoned galaxy, let me only name the Countess of Caledon and Lady Jane Alexander in the viceregal carriage, which Lady Georgina Hamilton only occupied for a short time, till she mounted a high-caste brown mare, seemingly very perfect in paces and manners, which the sedulous master of the horse, Col. Forster, had recently selected for her ladyship. The Duke of Leinster's party were also driving about. Though I have seen larger meets, I have seldom assisted at a more fashionable or patrician gathering, nor could many more picturesque frames be found for such a bright and lively assemblage than the undulating, well-timbered grounds of Mr. Ion Trant Hamilton's residence, with the blue mountains towering hazily in the distance, while the sparkle of rivulets and the ripple of brooks in the near foreground caught the eye and ear at every hundred yards. A lawn meet under such circumstances is a beautiful thing even now, when sad-coloured garments have greatly supplanted the imperial purple of the war path. Its fitting accessory is a hunt breakfast or *déjeuner à la fourchette*, if you will have the language of the Gaul applied to the better and more succulent edibles of Ireland. And this was there almost *à discrêtion*, I believe, though Mr. George Brooke, who enacted the part of host in the owner's absence at St. Stephen's—he is M.P. for Dublin county—was not able to make the fact so widely known as he would have wished.

There is no fox on the premises. Strange indeed had the resonant hoofs and the hum of carriages for an hour or two not scared away an animal of such sensitive nerves, and so little gregarious or social of habit. Hollywood Rath which gave us so pleasant a ring a few weeks earlier in the season, was carefully explored, but with a negative effect, and after this a move was made to Ballymacarney Gorse, which has been the *pièce de résistance* for Meath this season, what time its hounds made their monthly raids into the Dublin marches. Three times has the red hermit of Ballymacarney run stoutly and fast for from four to five miles before this pack, and each time he has earned his reprieve. Never perhaps were his staying powers more severely tested than on this occasion. Hardly had the very long procession wound its way by the farm-house and the miry lane to the prescribed borders by the gorse (indeed, many had not reached this limit), when somebody's 'gone away!' or the doubled horn, or something set every one stampeding for dear life. The riding men have thrown away cigars, tightened their girths, and no doubt hardened their hearts in proportion to the country they knew to be in front of them; the nickers and skirters are 'devouring' the Kilbride Road. Soon comes a brook, known I believe as the Ballymacarney brook—a mere nothing by rule or measure, but some six horses are engulfed in one spot I believe, and how many more I can't say. The country round is flat enough for Holland, the banks are high, the ditches are deep, and the fields very wide galloping extents, but as holding and viscous as putty well moulded. The run in its initial feature seems precisely similar to others I chronicled from the same good covert; but, whereas in the preceding gallops the fox raced straight away without a bend, on the present, when he reached a green lane, he ran it for a few hundred yards, till the noise of the thundering multitudes on the Dublin Road scared him back into his old course. The way the hounds ran this lane-way—heads up, sterns down—tells us that scent is most

congenial to-day. They have hardly time to apprise us of their estimation of the bouquet power, save by a suppressed note of joy at rare intervals. It is no day for babble—all business. Baytown and The Wooton have been left behind. The Ward River has been jumped, swum, forded, or refused. Capt. Bates, Mr. George Brooke, Mr. Hare, and not a few more can give their versions of the temperature of its waters, as they bathed in them more or less long. The Ashbourne Road has been crossed by the seventh milestone, Dunmicky has been passed, Newtown and Thornton have been run through (in a small grove I saw a blue veil sticking to a tree, and a man's hat—signs of the scurry—waiting to be claimed); at Chapel Midway there is a check of ten minutes. Swords seems the fox's point; but he swings round to the right by Killsallaghan and Mr. Cosgrave's house. The Ashbourne Road is again crossed; the Ward is passed; as the pack near Dunsoughly Castle—a fine old ruin—one of our daily rain and hail storms descends, and kills scent. The line is owned into Aungier's Gorse (and the fox, I hear, was a very beaten tod by then), thence into Hollywood Rath, after which point hounds were fairly nonplussed. Mr. Thompson now sounds his hospitable luncheon tocsin, and there is a general gathering, and much talking and discussion of the run, its episodes and its geography. For my own part I own to a most imperfect acquaintance with the topography of this pastoral, flat, and unmarked featureless country, so that I fear I have given a most feeble portraiture of a very fine but twisty run over a magnificent grass country, wholly innocent of plough or tillage, very strongly fenced, and most grief-haunted; 25 minutes to the first check, 55 minutes to the second —one hour and a quarter in all. For a run such as this men may come and men may go, men go up and men go down; but the master, Mr. Waller, Messrs. Trotter, Murphy, and Kearsly were seldom out of it, nor were Messrs. Johnson, Brooke, and Thompson far behind; Col. Lyster, Lord Cloncurry, Capt. J. Montgomery, and the Hon. Capt. Rowley also saw a deal of

it. Among the ladies Miss Hussey was most brilliantly carried to the end, while Mrs. Nugent and Miss Morrin saw the earlier stages of the chase from a good position. The pack having to return by train from Dunboyne, no more coverts were drawn to-day. Macbride's retirement from these hounds is a subject of very general regret.

Sport in Louth shared the fate of its neighbouring county, Meath, of recent days, having been all but deserted by Diana's best handmaid and satellite, scent. Earth-stopping, too, was somewhat carelessly done, and gave foxes extra chances. On the 29th ult. the pack were at Platten, and drew it blank, but found a brace in the Carnes, who got to ground very soon. A third proved no longer a stayer above ground. On the 3rd they ran a fox fast for a few minutes from Togher Gorse, but from Painstown they had a very fast quarter of an hour—to ground at Richard's-town; the line extremely good. On the 6th they rattled a fox sharply away from Mullahone till he got to earth near Garrets-town; when bolted, he ran his foil, and on to Westown, in the daily storm and rain. On the 9th, finding at Almondstown, they had a good fifteen minutes to the ruins of Callistown Old House. On the 11th, meeting at the mills of Louth, they found a fox at Drumgonna, but the earth-stopping spoilt a promising run in its first stage. At Lisrenny a fox ran a good ring by Louth Hall, Charlestown, and Pepperstown, then over the river to Glyde Court, getting to ground at Corballis after an hour and a half. A rare stout fox he must have been, for the hounds were always close to him. This proved perfectly satisfying to the field out, so Mr. Filgate did not draw on. I forgot, in alluding to the Meath hounds, to mention a nice gallop they had on Wednesday last, from Pratt's Gorse to Larch Hill.

On Saturday, the 11th inst., the phenomenon of a fine day presented itself, and very gratefully it must have been welcomed not only by the agriculturists and tillers of the soil, but by many a score of pursuers (not to speak of M.F.H.'s) whose studs must

necessarily be fast becoming limited in working power, and to whom incessant deluge means nasty overreaches, blows on back tendons, shoes wrenched off, and hoofs injured, with all the minor train of equine evils which heavy going involves. Add to these the hard-worked corps of valets, who have to present by an early hour garments spotlessly white and scrupulously clean and dry, when day after day they reach their ministering hands later and later in a pulpy, flaccid condition, more fit to all appearance for a paper mill than for the appropriate costume of a sportsman and a gentleman. It was not only a very fine day, but the air was luminously bright and clear, and things in the distance, especially architectural objects, which had not caught the eye for months, revealed themselves to-day in the clearest and best-defined outlines.

The Kildare hounds met at a point to which the light buoyant air and the warm sun rays lent much beauty. For the Upper Lodge gate of Harristown, which is synonymous with a rendezvous at Brannoxtown, is not only artistic in colouring, and outline but has the advantage of most graceful surroundings, leading as it does into fine park-like grounds, of goodly extent, and looking in every direction towards similar *pleasaunces*, well kept, well timbered, and rejoicing in a general air of *bien être*, not too common in Ireland to be despised. The meet was tolerably large, but not of unwieldy proportions, and Mr. Forbe's first reappearance in the hunting field since his accident was warmly welcomed, and formed a subject of general gratulation.

After a parade round a portion of the woods of Harristown, which revealed no fox life to-day, we trotted smartly through the village of Brannoxtown, always pleasantly tidy and comfortable of aspect, past Canny Court and Grange Beg, till, after some four or five miles of jogging, we turned into the green fields which lead up to Logatrina covert, where, owing to seclusion and good preservation, foxes are very often found, though the grove that harbours them is of the scantiest proportions. Nothing here

either! So westwards we trot on, and canter on over some bottom lands, till we are pulled up opposite the Bowery Gorse, formed by three or four little green hilly islets, set mainly in swamp. One of these held a fox, who broke good-naturedly in front of the major part of the field, and ran best pace towards Logatrina, picking out for his pads a higher and drier track than the one we had just made. The ground was soft and a bit of plough, perhaps the sole one to be seen for a long distance, rides heavy enough. The fence into it is very small, but rather misleads horses, and two gallant soldiers may be seen almost filling a furrow as their horses roll into it. "They lay together side by side; they filled their boots with clay," to parody Felicia Heman's well-known song most basely. A big furzy bank higher up takes some doing, but all get over it well. The next stage is a straight gallop, then a turn downwards into and over some water meadows, across the Dunlavin Road (that capital being but a few hundred yards to the right hand), and so on for a few fields apparently *en route* to Cryhelp Gorse, where we find that the hounds have flashed over the line, and a caste or two makes it all right again. On past Tober House, and over a beautiful line of grass fields very near Mr. West's deer park, across the Ballymore Eustace Road, till we reach by short stages the valley of the Upper Liffey, and are within a few fields of White Leas. Here scent died away to nothing, and we abandoned further questing.

Cryhelp produced a good fox, who broke well and ran smartly till he reached Tober's Old Buildings, by which we had so recently passed, and here he got to ground. Giltown Gorse, the last draw of the day, gave us a fox, but nothing very brilliant in the way of sport. He ran twistingly through Giltown Park, then crossing the Kilcullen road, made his way through Mr. Gaussen's fields, through Sallymount and Harristown; broke over Rochestown, crossed the Brannoxtown road, and was hunted with fast-failing scent through Moorhill, where, I fancy, the puzzle was abandoned for the day.

Sir David Roche's hounds had a very fine run on Monday, the 13th, which only wanted the crowning success of a kill to have been nearly perfect, pace having been good, the line grass, and the distance about seven miles, which I hold to be nearly long enough for all the component parts of a hunt, specially when the going in the rich vales of Limerick is so holding. They met at Rastemple, drew Glenna, and ran through Athlacca to Rockbarton, when the fox beat them into the main earth, which, being out of the stop, was open.

March 25th, 1876.

Tum variæ invadunt pestes.

Virgil: Georgics.

Between wire and weather, hunting has been in somewhat parlous case in this green island, which, with its natural pastoral and climatic advantages, ought to be the brightest and best of the many shrines of the great goddess Diana. The weather we must bow to—and, indeed, the cold blasts have not been all antagonistic to pursuit, for in intermittent half-hours scent has quickened up marvellously, and foxes have had to run very hard for their lives, though storms of hail and sleet have proved their salvation at the eleventh hour. But wire is an evil of our own creation at first, of our subsequent extension, and now of our easy passive toleration. How squires of many acres, prompted probably by Macs and Sandies from the Land of Cakes, first laid the deadly strands, though probably taking care that a good supply of gates and passes should not be wanting; how Scotch Triptolemi encased their farms in miles and miles of wire fencing; how the county shops soon found that they must make it a "leading article" in their hardware department, as the farmers of Ireland were one and all following the fatal fashion, till wire became a *quasi* fetish in the land, festooning banks, turned among quicks, and

coiled round every tree in the hedgerow—I have told before now.

> Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,
> Where wire accumulates and banks decay.

It is not a pleasant sight to see an ex-master of hounds turned over by wire in a brother master's park, and that in a first-class hunting country. Lord Spencer very nearly fell a victim to wire in Kildare during his viceroyalty, but was saved by pace and the stoutness of his hunter. I hear that in sacred Leicestershire he had again the narrowest of escapes only a week or two since. And yet I am not aware of any anti-wire organisation. No danger signals have been hoisted in the bad spots; the fences round fashionable gorses have not even been secured from the hateful presence. *Illi robur et æs triplex*—"a heart of oak was his who first, from Silliott led a frantic burst." Truly a Cato is wanted to ring continual changes on the *delenda est Carthago.* The Punic wire should be abolished—at least suspended during the hunting season; and if our imaginary Cato succeeded, like his patrician prototype, in disendowing and disestablishing the wire establishment, and like Alexander the Great—or 'our William'—sighed for new worlds to conquer or rampant evils to combat, there are the traps and the trappers, who have simply improved foxhunting off several districts in this our Ireland—the magnates who encourage, the ready tools who execute. Here be no windmills for a Quixotic tilt; but these fox-murderers are among us too real, too tangible. *Pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur.* In very truth, many of them assume the garb, the tone, the habits, and externals of foxhunters and genuine sportsmen!

De gustibus non! The sou'-west wind—type generally of mildness and softness—is sweeping over the face of the land, to the grievous disarray of stacks and ricks of corn and hay, the dislocation of roofs and slates. And it is lasting so long that presently it will have acquired a vested interest as a trade wind.

There is no anemometer that I know of nearer than the Phœnix Park or Kingstown Harbour, so I can give no statistics as to its duration and violence; but every pursuer who has faced it knows well that his top gear has seldom been so buffeted, his hat halyards more sorely strained. "Gie us nane of your rantin,' tantin', tearin' winds, but a thunderin', dunnerin', dryin' wind!" prayed Mitchell of Lamington, if tradition is to be believed. The last thirty or forty hours, had they succeeded his aspiration, would have made him a prophet among his fellows and contemporaries. The Kildare hounds met on the 14th at Sallins, when the paroxysms of gustiness were at their highest. Luckily, it is not an exposed region, but the commencement of that fine vale which the two main lines of Ireland's railway system compass between their metals.

> Know ye the land to which Sallins is portal,
> Whence cars "whirl you swift to the Punchestown Plains?

As so many do know these plains among your readers, and their portal too, there is little need to say a word about the Sallins surroundings, which are neither highly æsthetic nor strikingly picturesque. Suffice it here to state that few places in Ireland are more easily approached or quitted. At few stations will the Zingari foxhunter find the means and appliances for boxing or unboxing his horses more deftly manipulated, or more civil, painstaking officials, than at our trysting place of the morning. *Au reste*, though I could not recommend any hostelry at Sallins for a permanent or temporary home, you will find that gruel for weary homing hunters is always to be had here, and I have no doubt that a *poculum caritatis*, in which eggs and whisky will form the staple elements, can be knocked up for the rider as well at the shortest of notice.

The meet is a very large one—plethoric, if you consider the day, and the slender chances of hunting the fox till the inevitable downpour drowns the wings of this wind plague. The cause is

not far to seek. On the night of the 13th Dublin's capital (like Belgium's on a more memorable occasion) had gathered there not only its beauty and its chivalry, but the beauty and the chivalry of the provinces, and of that 'society' which is much at home in Mayfair and Belgravia. The Duke and Duchess of Abercorn had issued invitations by the hundreds for a pictorial or costume ball. Hundreds accepted, and of these hundreds some two score or thereabouts thought it wisdom and health to forego the land of bright dreams, and hunt the fox either in Meath at Dunshaughlin, or in Kildare at Sallins. I think Sallins must have had a large majority over the Meath line, as the hours on this line were considerably easier. At any rate, there were Matadors, Picadors, Blue Beards, and Henry VIII., Othellos, Hamlets, and Desdemonas, Ophelias, Cleopatras, Queens of Scots, Contadinas, Transteverinas, etc., all in costume again—but the costume the appropriate livery of Diana. Some one who counted habits said there were about a score or so in the field. Of course there were not a few strangers in the main streets of Sallins this morning: Mr. Mervyn Archdale was on his well-known grey mare; Mr. and Mrs. Adare and Mr. Skeffington Smyth hailed from the Queen's County, Mr. Power from Wexford. Lord Kilmaine was about the only Westmeath notable I saw in the great crowd; Lord Berehaven had travelled from the south-west. Both these sportsmen were very well mounted, and Lord Berehaven had evidently applied the horse maxim that "if you ride a grey hunter, be sure first he is a very capable one." It is no day for dallying, nor is coffee-housing likely to be very seducingly fashionable when a speaking trumpet and ear tubes would be much wanted for its successful progress; so Mr. Mansfield led his forces on to Bella Villa, not, as of recent time, by water—in other words, along the towing path of the Grand Canal, which would have been somewhat hazardous—but by the pleasanter and more sheltered road past Millicent House and Millicent Bridge. Bella Villa Gorse reached, the hounds invade

the covert, which is about half up, half cut; the field are posted in an adjoining pasture; and the first impulse of most people seemed to be to skirmish about for a hollow, a sheltering bank, or even the lee side of a bush of any kind. A fox was not forthcoming for some time, and, as usual, the *quidnuncs* were oracular about the "vulps" having been stopped in owing to the previous night's storm. At last a real fox confutes theories, crosses the park wall, and is forthwith hunted by the huge array of mounted men long before the pack presumed to appear on the scene. When they get on the line they follow their fox towards the lodge gate, when he turned his mask dead against the tempest, and got to ground in a clump of trees and shrubs very near Mr. Sweetman's residence—a bad beginning. Crossing the agitated canal, we soon come to Landenstown, where a very little modicum of covert usually furnishes several foxes; for I take it Miss Digby follows the traditions of her race and family, and gives strict orders as to preservation. However, it avails little to preserve in covert if enemies are on the watch outside, and this I heard was the case. At any rate no symptom or sign of fox life was elicited from laurel or screen to-day. Two foxes were said to have been seen moving away from Osberstown Gorse this morning; if so, they moved all the fox Lares and Penates with them, for we found no trace there after a long and patient investigation. A few miles brought us on to Punchestown Gorse, and here at last the patience of the stayers was rewarded; not that the outcome was a very wonderful gallop, or even fine long hunting pursuit, but an amount of sport and good patient hunting on the part of the bitches which one was hardly warranted in expecting in such a riot of wind. The fox broke handsomely over a bit of plough which is next the gorse, as if he meant to avail himself of the Baron de Robeck's extensive plantations; but something in the shape of a man or woman, or it may be a carriage on the Ballymore Eustace Road, scared him, and he turned sharp, ran through part of Keely's farm, and left the "furze hills" on the far side of

Punchestown course well to his left; thence by an old dilapidated cemetery, down one little pitch and up another, till he worked his way into Eadestown Gorse. After a very short delay he was extruded from this little snuggery, when he ran by a rather good-looking farm-house newly done up, across the Blessington Road, through Melia's farm, and so on, at leisurely pace, till we reached a point on the road near the corner of Forenaghts Park wall, thence through Forenaghts, till he found a drain near Furniss open, and plunged into its vacancy. I hear the Newbridge harriers found the *bouquet de lièvre* far more holding than the fox-hounds did their special aroma, and had rather a good afternoon about Halverstown on the same Tuesday.

The Meath hounds had the worst of weather on Monday, and the other circumstances on which hunting success is contingent did not favour them. As usual, there was a fine show of foxes *passim*. They found in Slane, and sent a fox to ground very soon, without much sport.

In Hussey's Gorse two turned up, but not of the stamp that your columns commemorated some weeks earlier. One of them was killed ingloriously, though in the open, after a very brief career. Bengerstown gave a better fox, who ran very fast before the pack for seventeen minutes, when the first check occurred. It proved a full stop.

On Tuesday a very large and fashionable field met the pack at Dunshaughlin, but the stigma of blankness was on the earlier draws of the day—very popular and holding draws too—and a ringing sort of run from Corballis to Corbalton was the only outcome of a day of great expectations.

Wednesday was principally noticeable for its extreme rigour and asperity—the west wind, the soft-sighing west wind, cutting like a mistral. Snow was suspended in the air all day long, and in some places enough fell to whiten the fields. Nevertheless the Ward Union hounds had one of their best and cheeriest forty minutes from the Flat House by the grand stand of the Fairy

House (which next month will be swarming with its busy, bustling hundreds), till, after a most peerless country had been galloped over, the finish—a welcome finish to many, I ween—took place at Kilbrue.

On the same day Mr. Robert Archbold's harriers, after chasing many hares, came on an outlying fox not far from Duckett's Gorse in the county Carlow, and gave him plenty of exercise at fair hunting pace for full 45 minutes. Superfluous to say here that Mr. Archbold is the strictest of fox preservers, not only for Kildare, but also for Carlow; and that his harriers are not only not inimical to the interest of either pack, but that, as a matter of fact, they are the best of allies to both—rattling foxes in the right season, and driving outliers into their natural gorses and spinneys, where they may be found when wanted.

On Thursday the Kildare hounds rendezvoused at Narraghmore Court-house, which was a meet *manqué* on account of a sudden snowfall on the last occasion of its recurrence on the correct card of February. In a previous letter I dwelt on the antiquity and glanced at the history of this ancient lordship, which, though shorn of its former prestige and splendour, has the *cachet* of fine old timber about its approaches, and thus retains a certain air of nobility beyond the attainment of mere bricks and mortar, stone or stucco; so the same ground need not be gone over again. I do not know how it fared with those who drove long distances to this fixture—and a good many did come on wheels; but I can answer for hacking thither being a most chilling and petrifying process. The great hill system to your left front, as you approach the meeting point from Sallins and Naas, was snow-flecked, and the higher peaks seemed to be deeply covered. A bright luminous sun, glistening on much water everywhere, radiated plenty of light, but little heat, and the west wind was driving away as frigidly as if some huge iceberg had drifted from the North Pole and cast anchor off Galway Bay or Westport. The square of Narraghmore was respectably filled,

but not crowded by any means, and among the array of pursuit were several strangers and visitors from neighbouring counties—notably Mr. Hare from East Meath, Lord Kilmaine from West Meath, Mr. Stewart Duckett, Mr. M'Clintock Bunbury, Mr. Bruen, Mr. Brown, and one or two more from Carlow, while the Queen's Bays mustered very strongly considering the uninviting character of the day, and the mileage from Newbridge.

Narraghmore Wood for once was foxless, and its neighbouring succursal gorse of Nine-tree Hill was equally barren. From thence we trotted on through Crookstown village, by its handsome limestone chapel, and, climbing a low hill, came soon to a nice secluded gorse on its summit, known as Spratstown Gorse. In four or five minutes a fine active fox was racing away over a bit of new grass right in front of the assembled field. His course, when he gains the vantage point of the nearest hedge, is down hill, over a small wet valley, and up the opposite hill, which rises with a huge truncated cone to a considerable height, forming a landmark for the entire neighbourhood. It is all grass, and on its eastern side there is a good bit of holding gorse, known as Matt's Gorse, a very sporting yeoman farmer, of the name of Matt Conran, being its tutelary genius. Through the edge of this covert the fox was rattled by the pack, and thence over some grass fields into Mr. Carroll's park of Ballynure. So far gates and gaps had favoured horses in a manner seldom met with in Ireland; presently we are arrested by a blocked-up gate and a sunk fence, which has to be jumped upwards, *i.e.*, with the wall facing you. Some half-dozen, among whom I fancy was Mr. Brunskill, took it as it came—nothing to jump, 'tis true, but repulsive-looking enough. The remainder, less impulsive and more prudent, took down the gate and got into the carriage drive which leads through fine timber to Mr. Carroll's residence. The hounds in the meantime had penetrated into the thick covert of laurel and bramble which clothes a small ravine watered by a trout beck, which separates the contiguous demesnes of Bally-

nure and Grange Con. A number followed their leader over this brook, and worked their way into Grange Con, to find presently that the fox (and hounds) had not entered those lands at all, but, swinging to the right, had passed by the old fox covert of Ballynure, and was now, with his head set sternly against the blast, in full career for Timolin and the hill covert of Ballycor. The pace was now extremely fast, and the fox could hardly have won his way to Castle Dermot or one of the friendly Carlow haunts had he persevered on this tack; so he sank the wind with great prudence, ran down Ballycor Hill, crossed a boggy brook, fortunately bridged over in places by causeways, and made his way, over some ploughed fields, back again into Spratstown Gorse; but here he was not allowed to dwell more than a minute or two, and once more he is breasting the wind-swept hill I alluded to in the beginning of the run, though now he seems intent rather on reaching Ballintaggart than on visiting "Matt's Gorse," which had proved so inhospitable a haven just now. At the road, however, his strength and resolution fail; so he doubles back and gains "Matt's Gorse," the hounds close to him, and to all appearances a doomed fox. The field are now walking their blown horses outside the covert fence, waiting for the seemingly instant and inevitable "mort." "Pray get me the brush for my niece," says a lady who had been riding a blood bay mare most intrepidly, to a gentleman near her. Catch your hair, says Mrs. Glasse, before you can jug him; kill your fox before you can claim a brush! At the supreme instant a rabbit hole saved him! A good stout fox, though he had twisty pads and a crooked neck, for did he not stand up for forty long minutes? nor could he have covered much less than seven or eight miles, for part of his journey was run at extreme speed.

The next scene is at Ballintaggart Gorse, the property and care of Col. Bonham, whose house near by was found very pleasant and hospitable by not a few hungry and thirsty wayfarers *en route* thither. A good dashing fox broke away at once from the gorse

in the direction of Hatfield covert. Respect for young grass caused us to make a long *détour* by the road, and when we had got into the country again it was to find that the fox had bent downwards to the right, crossed some water meadows, and was careering across Rathsallagh, Mr. Penefather's Park, with a view probably to the open earths where two runs had terminated so abruptly not many weeks ago. I suppose they were stopped tight to-day, for he ran right onwards, crossed the low park wall, and was in full swing for Grange Con, when near the indicating post on the road something headed him, and he turned round for Ballintaggart, to which point the hounds were following him slowly when I left them, with low, catchy scent. I hear they subsequently drew Hatfield, and ran a fox from it to Logatrina, but without any marked feature of interest.

Westmeath has suffered in common with her sister counties from the scent-forbidding weather, and the tale runs still of plenty of foxes, but no scent to hunt them withal.

The Moyvaughly fixture last week (Friday) was waited for by many who do not care about frittering away their own time and their hunters' on indifferent countries; but it was not up to its reputation on this occasion, save in the supply of foxes—the first fox from its gorse getting to ground soon after a very quick scurry; the second run thence promised well in its early stages, till a hailstorm came on apace and killed scent.

A glance at the list of hunting appointments in Ireland will show that the majority of masters in making them out were not unmindful that Friday, the 17th of March, was the national festival, and remembered to keep it jolly, if not holy (*more* Artemus Ward). Thus, not more than two packs, if I recollect right, were coloured for this Friday, and I may, I fancy, congratulate myself greatly in that a want of railway facilities and other causes prevented my attending a meet of the Meath hounds at Trim station. "Patrick's day in the morning" was bitterly cold and frosty, but fine. Soon after noon a hailstorm, almost blinding in its on-

slaught, came on, and quickly turned into a regular fall of snow for about an hour, which would make hunting barely possible for the remainder of the day. While I write it is freezing intensely hard.

Those who have travelled much by the Great Southern and Western lines must be very familiar with the porters' cry of "Hazelhatch and Celbridge;" not, indeed, that porter *patois* is much more intelligible than priestly *patois*—a ritualistic, melancholy, and mysterious monotone. But the Irish porter is more intelligible than his Bull brother. The station is some ten miles from Dublin, a mile or so from the flourishing village of Celbridge, on the banks of the Liffey, and introduces the travelling pursuer to reaches of extremely good country and holding coverts on either side of the metals. This station was the meeting point for the Kildare hounds and their followers and admirers on Saturday, the 18th inst., at the easy hour of 11.30. The meet was in many respects a reflex of the capital, which happens just now to be crowded to excess, as the season has opened there with three such balls as (I say it in no pseudo-patriotic or gasconading spirit) few cities save Dublin can give. Two were costume balls —the Duke of Abercorn the host in one case, Mrs. Roe the hostess in the second—the Castle and our Crystal Palace the dancing theatres; the third dancing function was in Patrick's Hall on St. Patrick's Night, and is always interesting and amusing, if for nothing else but to see a sort of epitome of Irish society, leavened as it is by many strange elements.

The horse traffic of the Great Southern and Western line must have been considerable this morning; but the officials are generally (owing to the immense number of race meetings in our little island) in capital practice, and can seldom be taken unawares. Mr. and Mrs. Adare represented the Queen's County, Mr. Mervyn Archdale the north, Lord Kilmaine Westmeath; of all the others time would fail me to tell the tale. But of noticeable horses the Hon. Mrs. Barton's grey would catch the eye of an amateur in any crowd, while five chestnuts—Tipperary Boy, who carried Lord

Clonmell; a five-year-old, that won second prize at the last Dublin show, ridden by Lord Cloncurry; Greek Fire, Col. Foster's mount, to whom the epithets elegant, accomplished, and symmetrical are most applicable; Mr. A. M'Neil's Meath county chestnut; and Mr. Chandos Pole's red son of old Stockwell's—form a quintette that would show well at any covert side, say of the Quorn hunt, which draws to itself a large proportion of the equine good looks and capacity in the kingdom. So much for the assembly. The morning was fine, but frosty and bitterly cold, while hail and snow flakes were in the air all day. Killadoon, Lord Leitrim's Park, Straffan, and Lodge Park were all tried unsuccessfully, when a fox was seen stealing through a corner of the latter into Lower Turnings, a small cottage with a thick screen of laurel and other shrubs, and the hounds were put on to him without delay. He ran by Castle Dillon, then turned very leisurely (as there was little scent to hunt him) back to Lodge Park, ran through it, crossed the Celbridge Road, and got into Straffan, where he was lost. Thick snowstorms now came on intermittently, and Castle Dillon, Bishopscourt, and Kill Hill Gorses were drawn during their progress, and drawn in vain. The cold was very great, and if foxes had been forthcoming, the chances are they could not have been hunted with satisfactory result. Home, stables, and kennels are the best places for bipeds and quadrupeds in such Arctic rigour. Among the coffee-housing *on dits* may be mentioned the vacancies among Irish M.F.H.'s, and some that cannot easily be adequately filled; the fixing of the 3rd prox. for the Kildare Redcoat Race; and a splendid competition anticipated for the Cole Cup, which the viscount of that name has generously offered for 15-stone genuine hunters, the arena two miles over the Maize course. Capt. J. M'Calmont, late 8th Hussars, has undertaken the recruiting service for this contest, and one or two more of similar type. His name is an augury of success.

While the Kildare hounds on Saturday, the 18th, were suffering the unalloyed miseries of plethoric fields, a paucity of foxes above

ground, the bitterest of weather, and the total absence of scent to hunt the one fox who showed on the occasion; while the master felt it as difficult to maintain his serenity under these circumstances as Pope's hostess amid the crash and ruin of her china —for his hounds were being kicked and trampled on promiscuously by chilled, impatient, and irritable horses—the Meath hounds had a capital ring and a handsome kill, and sent several of their followers home almost in time for luncheon. They met at Crosskeys, and drew Mr. Kearney's good covert at Galmoystown with the usual happy result. The fox started for Loughcrew, just brushed its woods, kept over the hill, and held on by Mr. Garnett's farm as if for Clonabraney; but presently pointed for Hemlinstown (though he did not enter the covert), and raced on for Lakefield till he was headed and baffled, and thus caused a short pause in the proceedings. The line now winds round by Crosskeys to Galmoystown, the starting point, and here they ran into him after a very pleasant fifty minutes, of which I believe Mr. Richard Featherstonhaugh and three Mr. Battersbys may be said metaphorically to have skimmed the cream. On the day before, meeting at Trim, this pack drew Trimleston, and ran a fox from its shelter to ground. From Tullanogue, I hear, they ran a fox very fast through Meadstown to Philpotstown, in which scurry Mr. Featherstonhaugh, of the 60th Rifles, got rather a shaking fall. The Ward Union hounds had a capital gallop on this bitter Saturday also, with a deer enlarged near Ballymadun who ran a sort of ring first, and then led his field over the Kilrue line towards Hollywood Rath—no one, as I heard, going in better form or with more *aplomb* than the Hon. Miss Bingham on the well-known chaser Prince George. It was a disastrous run to not a few. Mr. Nugent killed a valuable hunter, and Mr. Neeld, of the 17th Lancers, had a very severe fall in its progress.

The United Hunt (Cork) have been enjoying fair but not brilliant sport for the last few weeks; foxes have been found numerously, but scent has been as capricious here as in many other

hunting grounds on either side of the Channel. On the 18th, however, a large and very fashionable field that came to meet them at Watergrass Hill, found a totally different complexion of affairs. Fells Fort, the first draw, was unsuccessful; not so Johnson's, the second. Mason took his hounds about six fields off the road before they neared the covert, when a fine fox jumped up in front of them and ran to his vantage ground, where he only delayed them a minute or too; then they drove him on before them to Boltons, a thick gorse, which, however, he could only find time to pass through without hanging a moment as they pushed him on to Lenlara, and thence towards Walshtown. Here the scent began to lower considerably, and with it of course pace slackened; there was, however, little delay or hesitation, and the line led on by Connery's Brake into Bally Edmond, where the fox got to ground. This fine run of between eight and nine miles was voted "satisfying" by the field, and no more coverts were disturbed that day.

It speaks well for the show of foxes in Cork that this hunt has always found them when wanted; while in the Doneraile-Duhallow Duhallow-Doneraile country, though hunted five times per week, such a thing as a blank day or the semblance of one has, I hear, been unknown.

The Kildare hounds met at Canny Court on Monday, the 20th, and had a capital day's sport—a ring from the trysting place, a fine run from Cryhelp, and a charming gallop in the evening from Hatfield, *viâ* Gormanstown and Giltown Park—of which, having exhausted my limits, I will send details in my next budget.

April 1st, 1876.

> And, oh! if there be an Elysium on earth,
> It is this; it is this!

The old sorites or syllogism by which Themistocles maintained sophistically that his boy was the real ruler of Athens and its people, becaused he swayed his mother, the mother the

great man, and so on, may be applied, more or less appositely, to Britannia and her empire over the waves. Britannia and her kettle rule the winds, the winds rule the waves, *ergo*, etc., and why should not Britannia be an "empress?" Artemus Ward says her Imperial Highness has ruled them rather crookedly of late. But after the riot and debauch of winds and waves for the last ten days, during which any sort of indignity was perpetrated on the imperial dominions by land and sea, it was a relief to all senses to feel the hush and lull of Sunday and Monday, which was caused by a sharp frost—sharp and biting indeed, but not severe enough to threaten, much less suspend, hunting operations anywhere, save perhaps, in the north of Ireland, where, I hear, several inches of snow fell on Saturday; and it is really no libel to Northern Ireland to say that hunting is a very small-beer affair in that land of theology, flax, and indomitable energy. Early risers on Monday looked out on a grey, cold day, the earth curdled up, but not really hard—thin ice sheeting the stagnant waters, and stalactites of the same clinging to eaves, etc.—but the cold, penetrating wind of the last few days was absent. By eleven the sun shone out tolerably gaily, and those who journeyed to the meet of the Kildare Hounds from Naas and Sallins had no fear about riding bareheaded all day; nor did that chilling abnormal west wind make all sad of countenance as they assembled at the rendezvous. On the contrary, it was rather a cheerful congregation of fair proportion, but not of the extravagant and unwieldy size of Saturday's gathering, which, though very grateful to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the day (a large meet means sometimes £10 or £15 added to the hunt fund, and all in half-crowns!), must cause some anxiety to the master of hounds and the huntsman, and strike terror into not a few of the six and seven season hounds who have been ridden over, knocked down, and squeezed many a time and oft.

Canny Court is a nice modern hunting box, about a mile from the village of Brannoxtown, to which I think I have before now

introduced the readers of *The Field*. Beyond a grove and some thick clumps of shrubs it is unwooded; before it, and for many a broad acre behind the house, is an almost limitless area of sound grass pasture land; but to the north, and only separated from it by a few grass fields, are Moor Hill and Harristown, a little further on Sallymount, Newberry, and Giltown, all more or less wooded and parky; so that a fox making in that direction is not likely to give any very brilliant results in the way of hunting chronicle. Before I proceed to detail the events of the day, let me say a word or two about the proprietor of Canny Court and his family, seeing that few names are more inseparably linked with the fortunes of the Kildare Hunt than that of Mr. Joseph Kilbee. Ireland has, in a great measure of late years, abjured the culture of cereals, and thrown her energies and her vast capabilities into stock-raising and those branches of agriculture subsidiary to this main purpose. Among the foremost of the most enterprising of cattle raisers and factors in the island is Mr. Joseph Kilbee, whose name is almost as well known in western and central England as in his native land. But in the world of horses and hunting it is not much less notable; for few men have contrived to dovetail hunting into business more successfully than he has; few have ridden more determinedly or harder in Kildare, Meath, and Dublin than the owner of Canny Court, unless it be his eldest daughter, who, on one or two well-known small horses, has contrived, without apparent effort, to stay nearer hounds than most people.

Arriving just after the fox had been found, I cannot say exactly whence he jumped up; at any rate, it was not far from the house, and his first impulse was in a capital direction—towards Cryhelp. From this line, whether headed by man, woman, or sheepdog, I cannot say, but presently he inclined towards Moor Hill, ran by its well-shrubbed and wooded ravines, till he made Anneville, Mr. W. Kennedy's residence, when he bent again to the left, entered Rochestown, ran along the skirting

plantation, crossed the Ballymore Eustace Road, and beat the hounds in the glens and plantations of Moor Hill, which seemed very barren of scent; altogether a ring of between three and four miles over grass, and fast enough in bits to give your hunter a breather, if rather stuffy after his day of rest. Our next stage was one of two or three miles, cantering over the springiest of upland turf till we came to Cryhelp; most famous of gorses for stout foxes, but even more famous—infamous, if you will—for the troops of loose horses which a scurry from its "quadrilateral" is wont to generate if the fox takes certain well-known lines.

> Cryhelp, Cryhelp, O word of fear,
> Unpleasant to the craner's ear!

A cold, chilly spot always, specially so to-day, as the higher hill summits in front gleamed and glistened when the sun lit up their snowy masses, while in our foreground the snow-drift towards the ditches seemed to set the green fields in light silver frames. The hermit of Cryhelp was very considerate to our feelings, for he did not keep us five minutes in suspense, making away directly, and only just giving the tail men time to come up, the owners of second horses to mount them. Copelands or Tynte Park seem his destination, the former for choice. Men are just beginning to divide into two main lines—the lower leads presently into a furzy lane, where there is a *quasi jam* soon; while the high furze on the high banks precludes a good view of the motions of the pack. The riders on the upper line found themselves presently *vis-à-vis* of a very large, repulsive-looking bank to be jumped or climbed and scrambled over (I fancy there was, as usual, hereabouts a wide ditch on the far side). Six men I hear (for I did not see the catastrophe) went at it, and all six were soon prone. This gruesome vision of legs and arms sent not a few back to the lane I mentioned. When we emerged from it the hounds were clean out of sight, and said to be racing away for Dunlavin or Logatrina. It was a heterogeneous crowd

—a very "mixed multitude," ladies, lookers on, pad grooms, second horsemen, etc.; but there were good men among them who are seldom far away from hounds. So I need not say in Byronic language, "that there was hurrying in hot haste," a division of counsels, and red coats and black in no meek mood scurrying over the country—a hill and ravine had done this mischief. Some men at work near "the slate quarries" had turned the fox in his career. He now swung to the right, passed the gorse of Cryhelp, which he left to the right hand, and, crossing a road or two, made the ruins of Tober House. Here there was a check for a few minutes, not without advantage to certain stragglers. Then the line goes on towards "the Deerpark" for a bit, then inclines valewards, leads over a few walls, and presently we are in the lands of Grangebeg, passing Fair View, while a long and final check takes place very soon near Mount Fish and Gormanstown chapel—a good hunting run, nipped as it was ripening into something animating by the caprice of scent.

Logatrina passed by (though Mr. Allen's hospitality was not neglected by some of the field), we came to the Bowery Islands, knolls of gorse set in swamp and mere. They failed for once; so there was nothing for it but to cross the road and try the higher lying and secluded gorse of Hatfield, not much more than three-quarters of a mile to the westward. There was a fox on the premises there, and he broke soon, pointing for the Bowery, but it is not improbable that stragglers from the main body of the field turned him from this purpose, and made him leave it to his right (if so, they unwittingly did us yeomen service), while he chose a line over the uplands by a small farmhouse, and on to those high grass fields which overlook Thornton. Thence he plunged down through the wet fields of Mount Fish, passing the hunting box which poor, ill-fated, but most gallant Major Bookey, of sad Mediterranean memory, and his wife occupied for a season, and Gormanstown chapel, then crossed the Dunlavin

Road, and gave us a most animating gallop at good pace over the wide grass fields which I fancy belong to the topography of Lower Canny Court, next a big wide double, over which Mr. Graydon's chestnut gave us a good lead, and thence more slowly over the fields opposite to the Giltown Park wall, which he crossed. We now enter the park by the Gormanstown lodge-gate, to find our fox has brushed by the well-kept gorse, run the skirting plantation for a few hundred yards, jumped the park wall a second time, and is in full career towards Halverstown, with the Yellow Bog church passed on the right hand. One large double reared itself, menacing, repulsive, and anything but safe-looking, halfway thither. The taking off was not too good, and it required horse and man to be in downright earnest to get over it successfully. This Mr. F. Blacker piloted a small party over with much vigour and good result; the rest—they did not run away exactly, like the folk in Gammer Gurton's rhymes, but, like good generals, they either flanked it or saw the wisdom and expediency of another line. In Halverstown a fresh fox turned up, and took off some of the hounds, and one or both of the whips had disabled their horses, so the hunted fox had his life prospects infinitely improved by the delay and confusion, as well as the lateness of the hour. He was taken to the Bowery, or rather within a few fields of it; perseverance, under the circumstances, being out of the question. And so ends the tale of a very pleasant day's sport, enjoyed much by all out.

The Kildare hounds were at Ballysax on Tuesday, the 21st of March, and many causes combine to make the fixture generally a a most plethoric affair; but whether it was the miserable aspect of a most depressing day, or the paucity of horses available, or the *trinoda necessitas* of the House of Lords, the House of Commons, and the Houses of Justice, which are now sitting conjointly in England and Ireland, the pleasant manor house of Ballysax, with its quaint old church, have seldom seen a smaller assembly than Mr. Mansfield welcomed at 11.30 of the clock.

It was no day for anything but business. Covert coats were close reefed; and I dare say if the footmen's long drab coats could have been borrowed for an hour or two, not a few shivering pursuers would have condescended to don livery for the interval before finding. Snow had very abundantly powdered those who had long rides or drives homewards after the good hunting run of yesterday evening, but then it did not lie in the soddened vale. The upper latitudes, so far as we could see them, wore a plentiful surcoat, and the thin rain which was fast falling was nothing more genial than melted snow. The racing and chasing celebrities that honour the meets of the Kildare hounds when they happen to be within easy reach of their training quarters were conspicuous by their absence; and though said celebrities are not often the pleasantest of company in the hunting field, they are always a cynosure for amateurs of the noble animal in his highest phases of energetic existence; and it certainly is a treat to see such animals as Revenge, Scots Grey, June Wine, taking their part in the morning performances together with a whole cloud of lesser lights in the equine firmament. I know few hunting fields in the world where so many celebrities and notables in the horse hierarchy may be seen at a covert side as in this portion of the Kildare hunting grounds. The last hunter from this part of the world, who has distinguished himself considerably in England, and done his hard-riding owner good service, is Newbridge, who, when I last saw him, had just emerged from a boggy drain, and gave Mr. Knox, waterlogged as he was, no little trouble in catching him.

Martinstown, the inexhaustible, was the nearest covert, and it proved the first draw—needless to say that it held, two jumping up in the thicket of laurel and privet opposite the pretty châlet-looking house where Mr. John Hamilton ever exercises the most genial hospitality to all of the woodcraft guild, and preserves foxes for them as they should be preserved, but, as a matter of fact, seldom are, save in theory and by the non-owners of coverts.

These foxes ran a somewhat parallel line towards Ballyshannon, but the foremost was headed back by a reverend padre on his walks and got into covert again. The second broke, but some little time was cut into in getting the pack on to him, and proximity was an essential in hunting to-day, as scent was not very high. His line led nearly to Normanby Lodge, so called from the noble marquis who held the sword of state in Ireland more than a generation ago, and who delighted in taking his pleasure with his racing stud at the Curragh, when it inclined towards the gravelly hills that overlook Ballysax, thence to the Curragh edge, where hounds had to give up the problem.

It is a very long trot to Giltown, but there was no help for it after the various gorse thickets on the Athgarvan edge of the great plain had been carefully searched, and the Hon. Mrs. Forbes's good things, edible and potable, duly appreciated by a cold, wet crowd—a crowd, though a small one. The chances of finding at Giltown were small, considering that the dog-pack, in full chorus and in fine voice, had chevied a fox by the edge of it yesterday evening, but its holding properties are well known, and faith was reposed in them and the seclusion of the place.

Presently, as men are shivering at the edge of the gorse, the Major (Borrowes) appears on the scene *en cantinière.* I believe his canteen held orange brandy, and I do *not* think it was neglected or declined by a good many. *Hinc illæ lacrymæ;* hence, I think, a perceptible *furia Celtica* in the riding presently.

But the hounds have come out, the horn is blown for all stragglers, and the word is given for Silliott Gorse, when the second whip tallies a very dark fox—ragged as to his brush—stealing away as if for Canny Court.

The hounds are clapped on in a moment, and, after one little ring, the field is charging the sunk fence in a long line—twenty miles an hour. I see a chestnut, a famous bank jumper, back in it, but his owner is standing over him all right, and I hope his

horse is so too. More galloping over green expanses on to the Kilcullen Road, to which a bank leads some. A smaller group charges some new timber, which Lord Kilmaine, Mr. Brunskill, and one or two more clear gaily. An officer of the Queen's Bays hits it hard with his hunter's forelegs and comes down seemingly heavily, but he is soon up and going again, for the road siding where he fell was fortunately soft. The hounds are very near their fox. They have viewed him in the open more than once, and a yellow and white hound almost got up to him in the park; but Mr. Gaussen's plantations now help him, and so do the wooded banks of the Liffey. He presently tries another element, crossing the river and running in the direction of Melon Hill and back by New Abbey. A field near Mile Mill is fatal to him, and so ends the career of a fox well known by the hunt—a fast runner but somewhat a homestayer. Silliot Hill sent forth a third fox, who gave the field nearly an hour and a half of galloping and jumping, but all in a sort of ring. While these things occupied the hunting world of Kildare, the Orchard or Queen's County Hunt races were going on in that charming valley which, had it been situated in the Peloponnesus in the older days of history, would have become world-famous, enamelled into story with the Vale of Tempe or that of Nemea. It is not given to every scribe to attain the ubiquitous soarings of Sir D. Boyle Roche's bird, so yours had to be content to see the Kildare sport in the afternoon, and then post across that dreary Barrowvalley in the evening; all the drearier in that a native with, no very definite knowledge of right and left, made it longer by misleading him into a bight between the Barrow and a canal, which in his indignation he regarded as the celebrated and not-to-be-envied position of the traveller 'twixt the devil and the deep sea. His object was to meet Mr. Cosby's hounds at Timahoe on the following day, the rendezvous being sure to be well and fashionably attended, and the chances of stirring sport far from problematical. On arriving at Stradbally—to drop the third person—I found the

racing excitement unevaporated. The day had been wetter and more detestable than in the kingdom of Kildare, but the fine sport—one magnificent finish in particular, between Martha, Miss Theo, Mountain Lad, and Peter Simple—compensating for all *contretemps*. Dean Swift, from the Stradbally hunting stables, won his plate most cleverly.

Wednesday introduced us to a curling, crispy day, bitterly cold, but bracing withal and tonicky. An ecstatic day for those who love tonics or Platonics, among whom I cannot class myself, as I acquiesce in Byron's judgment of the founder of that sect. Yes! The cold in clime are cold in blood; their love, says the same poet, it scarce deserves the name. I have no doubt that the ardour of many keen pursuers had waned down to the Laodicean standard ere they reached the Plazza of Timahoe at, say, 10.45, stung by the north-east wind, and numb almost to anæsthesia in hands and feet. But the sight in this monastic little village was cheering and pleasant, and bright of colour and panoramic. My last visit here was on Mr. Cosby's opening day, when something less than a score met in rain and tempest, but had in the evening a very fine rewarding gallop. To-day the crisp roads are resonant with wheels from all sides, and here comes the master's coach and the chestnut team, with every buckle and bolt and bow as fresh and perfect and burnished as if Greenwich and not Timahoe had been the terminus, the Magazine in May the starting point. It is crowded with race guests, among whom may be seen General and Mrs. Seymour, Capt. Lee, and several Curragh men, Mr. Horace Rochfort, Mr. Stuart Duckett, from Carlow, Capt. M. Tynte, and many others, insides and outsides, the former seemingly having rather the best of it.

Orchard races, with a hospitable neighbourhood, have evidently drawn, for here are sportsmen from Kildare, Waterford, the King's County, Kilkenny, and other places I wot not of; English, Irish, and Scotch, all drawn together and fused harmoniously by the magnetic force of foxhunting.

Here Celts we are all in our love of thee—

to paraphrase the sonorous welcome of the Laureate! There is snow on the hills around, specially to the eastward; there is snow in the air, falling in single flakes intermittently; the sun is garishly bright; everything looks gaudy and radiant. No one's divination presages burning scent, and yet—but the "white monie" has all been collected, and we are jogging on briskly through green fields, having turned off some road. The briskness, however, is likely to die away soon, for every field is as full of soaked-up water as a sponge, and has no elasticity. Presently our guide (I cannot call him philosopher or friend) conducts the hunting train into a ploughed field, perhaps the only one he could select in many square acres, whose depths and holding powers I imagine horses will not easily forget. Was this to show the deep cultivation of the soil in this county, or some other Manichæan device? Once past this ploughy-pilgrimage we are on the slope of a hill and on the edge of a green parallelogram of fairly thick gorse, known as Sling. Mr. Corcoran is its owner, and its reputation is great. Hounds had been in it some minutes, and the betting is 5 to 1 against a find, when the red regiment above us is seen in quickest motion breasting the steep hill, the hounds streaming away in front of them. This hill is Cullenagh, a huge oval hummock, furzey and heathy on top, while its undrained sides are soddened with accumulated water, and the cattle gaps in the fences are sloughs of the deepest despond. I cannot tell what the gradient is; but I know, and every hunter knows full well, that it is very steep—steep as many of the Sussex hills, and larger and broader and higher than many of those I can recollect there. To jump stiff banks and ditches under these circumstances requires condition, heart, and the best of training; but nearly all the horses out are hunters, many of them seasoned and good. The light weights and their followers ride nearly straight up the long incline; others take a medium course; some others wind round the lower shoulder, having a longer distance to go, but a less tiring and distressing journey. The hounds mean-

time have run over the hill, are now descending it, and showing by their pace and drive that scent is all they desire. I had followed two pilots on greys that I thought fully certificated at the Trinity House of the country; Mr. Rochfort, on his well-known grey mare, who is generally to be trusted for quick eye and intuition of a line, be the country the Heythrop, the Carlow, or the Kilkenny; Mr. Adare, the second, was on a very fine iron grey, a son of M. D.'s and Flax, Lord Howth's celebrated mare, and his lead seemed to confirm Mr. Rochfort's, and appeared ample security for staying with hounds. Alas! 'tis not in mortals to command success, or foxes! our party was not only wrong, but the wrongest, if I may coin the word, of all. Below us is Ballyroan village, and a cordon of unridable bog. The hounds come right down the hill, but the fox has turned sharp back, leaving some trees to his right, and the pack are streaming away up the hill; hopeless to catch for those at its base or near it, very difficult for those who had come halfway down, but most happily for the division who, having ascended the broad summit, and probably blown their horses more or less in doing so, waited the course of events there as patiently as might be, *facilis descensus* Averni or Cullenagh. They sailed along pleasantly now over comparatively light land, crossed a road which I make no doubt leads to some town or other, though where I cannot say, and then rode a line of strongly-fenced grass, holding, but not so bad as the early forenoon experience. Passing through, I believe, the lands of Clonticho, if one must be topographical, Lennon's Gorse is left less than half a mile on the right hand; and, for my own part, when I got round Cullenagh on to high ground the picture before me was of a miniature Bull's Run; a few men and horses—very few—toiling painfully up another grassy hill known as Fossy; the intermediate vale dotted with horses succumbing or succumbed; a field beaten, demoralised, squandered, with hounds still running up to their fox, and a gallant minority following, but thoroughly beaten. Fifty-one

minutes, with a beginning such as I attempted to describe, told out all performers, even "the walking gentleman," the fox who now took refuge in one of those thickly planted coombes above Orchard racecourse, from which last Saturday week we had such a pleasant run. Two fresh foxes soon issued from it, but the hounds were not to be baffled of their prey, and in twenty minutes more the good hill fox was turned, by a very practical metempsychosis, into hound. The earlier stages of this run were up wind; hence the severity of the pace. Orchard Gorse lay invitingly below us—an almost certain find; but second horses had not come up, and the first had done a real day's work, so Capt. Cosby was obliged to turn homewards. The master, Mr. Moore, and a very few more, including Messrs. Leech, Kilbride, and Dunn, were not very far from the pack throughout. "You can't give up the hounds," said a black-coated welter weight to the captain, who had beaten most of those out. I think he echoed the general sentiment of all sportsmen; but, alas! arrangements for meeting his announced resignation are already inchoate, a committee formed, a manager named. As, however, nothing final can be settled before the meeting on the 15th proximo, let us hope, for the sake of the Queen's County—for the sake of hunting in Ireland—that if the mental balance be wavering, to-day's fine sport (said to be the best of the season here) may incline it to the retractation point. This pack had a very fine hunting run last Thursday also, from a wild patch of gorse near Lennon's, taking their fox by Feroda into the Kilkenny territory.

No man who undertakes an important public service such as keeping the hounds of a great county like the Queen's, with all its ancient prestige and dearly prized traditions (I believe I am tolerably correct in stating that the Queen's County and Kilkenny were the cunabula and shrines of hunting; the rallying point for mighty Nimrods long before some counties now infinitely more fashionable in the hunting world had been

organised and worked up into their present state of perfection) can escape the shafts of detraction, the carpings of critics more or less well informed on the subjects about which they dogmatically predicate. In Ireland this *frondeur* faculty is especially keen, and is cultivated to the injury of the country at large and individuals in particular, and at the expense of the nobler attributes of enterprise, zeal, and co-operation. Why Capt. Cosby's hounds and their surroundings were not more cordially welcomed and zealously supported in the county—whether politics or personal proclivities, whether the *beaux yeux* or pistol prowess of his great grandfather or great uncle had anything to do with it, or whether prophets and masters of hounds flourish best in alien soils—it is not my province or within my power to decide. This I will say, that whether I was specially and exceptionally fortunate in my repeated visits to his country or not, I there saw a pack of hounds eminently well appointed, servants faultlessly turned out, and beautifully mounted on real capable horses; and in result on every occasion sport of very high class, sometimes rising to the loftier heights of brilliancy and splendour. Virtutem incolumem odimus, sublatam ex oculis quærimus invidi.

> We're blind to the worth that we meet every day,
> Like children we cry when it's taken away.

Among the curios of hunting, I may mention that the Giltown fox was observed by some ladies last Tuesday, as he left the gorse, to pick up a rabbit which he carried for some distance like a retriever till, hard pressed, he dropped him. The rabbit, seemingly none the worse, pulled himself together, and scurried away. I have some recollection of one of his Grace of Beaufort's foxes committing a similar felony on a duck in a run from Bean Wood across the Sodbury Vale.

It is a drive of some twenty odd miles English from Stradbally to the Wicklow part of the Kildare territory, where Tinoran Hill

was the *point de mire* for the followers of that pack on Thursday, the 23rd. The night, intensely cold and frosty, was succeeded by a very glorious day, which set all the tillers of the soil to work in earnest, to make up for the lateness of the season. The Kildare field was very small, but Carlow helped to swell its numbers. The day's sport was of the lowest class, and scent was not lying well. A fox bullied about between Tinoran and Hughestown for some time without effect; Ballyhook and Whitestown drawn blank; Copelands producing a brace, of which one ran towards Tynte Park; the other hunted for a few fields in the direction of Cryhelp, till headed on a road, and never recovered—forms a wretched sum total; but is nevertheless what some advertising barber classically calls the *nuda veritas.*

Want of space prevented my sending you an abstract of the proceedings of the Louth hounds in my last; but as this pack and the foxes they pursued were as tempest-tossed, and perhaps rather more so, than their insular brethren, I may here mention that a fine hunting run from Gillinstown bog by Somerville, Thomastown, Slane, and Duleek, ending in a kill after an hour and fifty minutes, was the most noteworthy passage therein.

Last Tuesday this pack had a nice ring from Baltrasna and then on to Galtrim, where the hounds were over pressed and lost their fox. From Pratt's Gorse part of a divided pack had a smart run over the Midland line to Rahinstown, while the body were still hunting busily in covert.

The Ward Union hounds hunted a couple of deer on Monday. The first ran well for thirty-five minutes by Gerardstown fox covert to the hill of Screen; the second was a short goer. The Queen's Bays very liberally give a Farmers' and Hunters' race on the occasion of their regimental races on Newbridge course on the 7th prox. The farmers, for wise racing reasons, decline contending for more than £19. 19*s*.

On Friday the rainfall was most copious and continuous, and

ecce signum! The followers of that most pleasant little afternoon pack, the Newbridge harriers, who generally form a compact body that a provincial M.F.H. might wonder at complacently as he discounted the coming half-crowns, could be readily numbered on one hand. Nevertheless, they found a good stout hare near Limerick Bridge, the meeting point, and had a merry thirty minutes with her. An omniscient London "daily," whose circulation may be for the present numbered by the sands of the sea, not long ago informed its readers that the Prussian government, or War Office, keeps hounds at certain military stations for the benefit of the cavalry, and, I suppose, specially for the Uhlan service. The Prussian beaurocracy is wise in its generation, very wise. But as our services derive the same amount of instruction and practice in cross country equitation and the difficult art of reaching one distant given point from another on horseback, from certain self-supporting packs of hounds, notably the Ward Union staghounds, the Newbridge harriers, and in a less degree from the Kildare and Meath packs, surely a paternal government (such as our present) ought to consider the expediency of granting fair subventions to these packs. Waterloo, said the Duke, was won in the playing fields of Eton. Perhaps Balaclava and other trophies owe something to the early hunting training of officers.

If Friday were washing day in Dame Nature's calendar, the following Saturday was her drying day, and the efficacy of the process was fully borne out by the result, for the field that met at the castellated-lodge gate of Donadea, Sir Gerald Aylmer's park, were innocent of mud specks, and the glory of purple and the pride of polish had no dimming or disturbing elements. I have before described a Kildare meet at the same point, so will content myself with Parolles' or Pistol's *pocas palabras* on the occasion. It was a large gathering, but smaller than such a locality and such a country usually attracts. The Senate, the Liverpool, various county hunt meetings imminent, must account

for the absence of several pursuers, and also for others sitting on cobs *vice* hunters. Mr. Chapman and Mr. A. Macneil were about the only Meath men I saw, and Mr. and Mrs. Adare had come by train from the Queen's County. Dublin sent a very few. The most striking thing of the morning is the huge amount of high wall that "circumvallates" Donadea; whence come the stones to rear it? Has it a recondite history like the Pyramids? Round this wall we journeyed for some time, drawing, and in vain, the Hill Gorse, the Decoy Wood, and then some wild clumps of gorse near Painstown; thence we trotted past Hortlands—Hortlands of most happy hunting memories this season, and at last found ourselves outside of Cappagh Gorse. In ten minutes more the field is widely dispersed all over those large old pasture fields—some seeking gaps, some looking for the best places in the large fences that here divide the fields. The hounds ran down very nearly to Newtown village, checked, and then took up the line to a road, when another check occurred. Thence, in a sort of crescent, they ran their fox into Ballycaghan Gorse, crossing some very large obstacles which, however, did not illustrate "the descent of man" to-day, save in one or two instances (a general officer being reduced to a walking position for one). Ballycaghan Gorse is of considerable extent, and the hounds worked their fox out of it very quickly, when its size is taken into account. Mr. Ambrose More O'Ferral viewed him stealing away over the only bit of plough we can see for miles in this sea of greenery; the hounds were clapped on, and for a mile or two there was a beautiful bit of galloping and jumping in the direction of Hortlands. The line then inclined back to Cappagh, and I left them hunting thither with very cold fitful scent. The country and the going were simply perfect.

The Queen's County hounds have done nothing very brilliant since the Wednesday I wrote about on Saturday last. Foxes were found wherever they tried Sheffield, Cremorgan, and

Orchard, but, beyond a few good bits in three runs, there was nothing sustained or continuous.

The Kildare hounds had a sharp fifteen minutes from the Hill of Allen by Newpark to ground in Coolock Hill on Monday, the 27th.

Let me now glance retrospectively at the *gesta* of the Meath hounds. On Monday, the 20th, they had the misfortune to chop a fox in Farrenalcock Gorse, from which great things were naturally expected. Blake's Gorse gave them a short scurry over a wild bit of country. Shancarran held a brace, one of whom they took along by Kingsfort and the Mullagh, and rolled him over near Cherrymount. On the 21st they had a nice gallop from Pratt's Gorse towards Ryndville. On the 23rd Slater's Gorse gave them a good fox, who took them a beautiful line, running through Corballis and Kilmoon; forty minutes. On the 24th they were at Drewstown, and, after a lot of covert and park hunting in the early hours, had a sort of double ring from the never-failing Rathmore Gorse.

In Louth, on Monday, the 20th, Mr. Filgate, after drawing Drakestown blank, and finding nothing but two dogs in Skedog, got hold of a good fox in Painstown, who came away in good style over Tubberdoney, by Stakillen, and thence to Ardee, when he turned back through Harristown, crossed Mullacury Hill and racecourse, and got to ground in a rabbit hole. On the 24th, finding in Glenmore, the hounds sent their fox over the White Mountain by Curragubbin Rocks to Duleek, along the line for a bit, and on to Thomastown Bog, where the fox waited, and then took the pack straight into Somerville; one hour and five minutes up to this. After this the pack divided, and the rest of the hunting was a series of rings.

The two last Mondays have been red-letter festivals for the Union Hunt (Cork). On the 20th they ran a fox at great pace uninterruptedly from Farside Wood to Trabolgan, Lord Fermoy's fine park, where they broke him up, and did justice

to the noble lord's hospitality afterwards. On the 27th they had a very large, fashionable meet at Lenlara, and found their first fox at Dundillerick; him they ran very fast towards Johnston's, where he bent for Kilgrane, and made Bolton's covert. A fresh fox took his place, and him they hunted over a most intricate line by Watergrass Hill and Fellsfort towards Temple Michael, where he was lost—eight miles and good. The ride home through snow.

April 8th, 1876.

Martiis cœlebs quid agam calendis.

The Martial month's closing! ye bachelors free,
Cease your plaints about "Regal," come to Newbridge with me.

A very free translation of a beautiful sapphic of our old friend Flaccus; but it must serve as a guide-post indicating that we are *en route* for Newbridge on the Liffey, to meet the Kildare hounds at that thriving little city, whose *raison d'etre* is cavalry and Artillery, as for those arms of Her Majesty's service, and for those only, Newbridge lives, moves, and has her being. The day is phenomenally bright and still; a slight sprinkling of sleety snow fell in the earlier morning, but by 11 A.M. there is a look of spring all round. Missel thrushes hail the golden sunshine descending on the earth, like Jupiter when he visited Danae. Crows, whose nesting operations have been sadly deranged by the recent tempests of wind and rain, are busy foraging for architectural material in every road and field; violets begin to show singly in the more sheltered banks; and primroses have sent out a thin line of skirmishers to feel the way for their coming battalions. Yes, everything warns us to take the epicurean's advice, given us in the selfsame sapphic:

Dona præsentis rape lætus horæ et
Linque severa.

Regal's win, of course, did not suit the admirers of Clonave and Liberator; but surely Gamebird and Lady Patricia gave you every chance of obtaining redress and "justice to Ireland." *Linque severa!* Cease these early, intempestive calculations on odds incalculable. Leave battles to the Turkish hordes—in other words, to the ring men, who, like the birds of prey, will too soon fasten on their Prometheus, chained like yourself, perhaps, to the racing stake. *Carpe diem;* hunt while you may. The days of this mimic warfare are already numbered. I have no doubt, if we reach the trysting point in time, the "Bays" and the horse gunners will help us to shed the blood of Scio's vine as freely as our humour prompts us. But here we are at the bridge, yclept New—I suppose there was a ford before the military era. Let us pass the sentinelled portals, and join the festive throng in the barrack square, where, on the dressed grass plot, Will Freeman and his lieutenants are shepherding eighteen couple of doghounds, who look as strong, muscular, and lusty as if they had not done their own share in the fox campaign this season—as sanguinary a campaign as the Kildare foxes ever suffered perhaps—and were ready to hunt on for a couple of months more, instead of æstivating in their kennels. *Omnes eodem cogimur*—two currents set strongly. By one we are drawn towards the R.H.A. mess room; by the other to a similar hall a hundred yards further on, now tenanted by "the Bays." In either you may, like great Anna whom three realms *obey*, not only counsel take, but also *tay* (the rhyme is not mine, but Pope's); and if the eager air and a long ride make you aspire to something shorter or stronger, you will find the luscious cups of Copenhagen and Amsterdam flowing free, with the treasures which the monkish herbalists of Chartreuse, Fécamp, and La Trappe know how to distil so cunningly. The square is populous with hunting men and women, and the porters at Newbridge station have unboxed hunters from Dublin, Carlow, the Queen's County, and I doubt not from other parts too. The master, Mr. Mansfield, has, for almost the first time that I can call to mind,

failed to appear, and we hear with general regret that some form of the prevailing "throatiness" is the cause. Mr. Medlicott undertakes the duties of deputy, and is very liberal to the talkers and coffee-housers. Setting his field in motion through the Newbridge "High" just about noon, a mile brings the long *cortége*, looking brighter than an emperor butterfly as it winds by the trees of Moorfield, to the edge of the Curragh. But, to our surprise, we turn, not leftwards to try those furzy knolls which rear themselves behind and all round the cemetery, but canter or gallop along past the stand-house for a mile or two till we find ourselves by the Curragh Gorse, which seems anything but a holding fox haunt, though our recent experience has taught even outsiders that it contains an earth which may or may not be stopped. Perhaps it was open to-day; at any rate, no hound opened in the green area, and our next visit is to Doncie's Gorse, a much more likely spot for a find, judging by the two last seasons' experience. This too was foxless this afternoon; so the programme of the day takes us to a point a couple of miles further on westwards—Dunmurry Hill—where, in addition to the gorse proper many score of acres, now vestured with a livery of green and gold, afford shelter in their recesses to foxes whose number is said to be legion. We found none, though I must say, in justice, the entire hill, or more than half of it, was not examined. In the neighbouring gorse of Boston (Lord Valentia's Boston) a hound or two opened, but nothing came of it; and when it was anounced on authority that the Hill of Allen was our destination, the major part of the field appeared to resolve itself into a luncheon committee; for the numbers who mustered at the base of this great hummock, where the hounds turned off to the right to reach the gorse on its side, were anything but considerable. The Hill of Allen is not on the threshold of a pleasant or inviting country; and as for riding spirally round it, among furze bushes, boulders, and hazel scrub, that is a thing no one much affects, save with a cubhunter. Hence it fortuned that of the few remaining, few got

well away with the hounds when they found. Some were left in the very far distance—among the latter the party to which I had attached myself. Nor should we have known anything about the Allen episode had we not ridden up from the eastern side of the hill past "the Observatory," in an inquiring mood, as we saw no hounds. Then in the vale below—along the one ridable line in front—was the entire dramatic company, plying their several tasks as best they might. There is a good road by the handsome chapel of Allen, once you have got down the hill. There you can learn the chapter of events; possibly, if the fox runs long and straight, you may make a good nick in, and atone for your want of vigilance. It was not to be! The hounds had got away close to their hill fox—perhaps the same one they chased along the same line a year ago—raced him down the steep, across the Kildare Road, and so on over some light riding plough, till the lands of New Park, Mr. Dowd's residence, are entered, thence on towards a commanding knoll, crowned by a few fir trees, when he turned to the right, crossed the Kilmague Road, and brought the pack to their noses on some furzy hillocks known locally as the Coolock Hills, where they soon had to abandon the quest, the day growing intensely cold, and scent dying away to nothing. It was a very sharp couple of miles for those with the pack a small minority, among whom I hear Mrs. Nugent kept her place right well; a race for those who had to ride a stern chase. There was a fall or two, for the fencing was decidedly large and uninviting, and an officer of the 3rd Dragoon Guards had an unpleasant experience with a hard puller in a wood. The Hill of Allen looks upon a very poor hunting country; swamp on one side, a red peat moss on the other, in front a long line of tilth; but commend me to the natives I met hereabouts for helping one to find hounds, and good nature in the matter of gaps and exits through unridable places.

I suppose the amount of grief and disaster in this very short excursion, has seldom been exceeded on sound land where

there has been no sensational brook or trappy double interposed. The fences were simply wider than the average. One pursuer was down three times, and his featherweight was all in his horse's favour. Another, whose experience in Kildare and on the other side of the Channel is of the widest, maintained that he had never been over a much more difficult line.

There has been a disappointment somehow about Lord Cole's cup for 15-stone hunters to be run for at the coming Maize meeting; but as a rose by any other name will smell as sweet, so perhaps the winner will view it as complacently on his side-board under the style and title of the Hillsboro' Cup.

The pleasant and prosperous little town of Blessington, under the shadows of the Wicklow grouse mountains, was the meeting point for the Kildare hounds on Tuesday, the 28th, some twelve or thirteen miles by road from the metropolis of Ireland; six or seven (Irish) from the capital of Kildare. Though far removed from the sounds of steam and railway whistles, Blessington has always commanded a goodly array in its square; but the Chancellor of the Exchequer was seldom, if ever, less puzzled about his surplus million or two than was the collector of the hunting tolls and droits to-day about the disposal of his half-crowns. There was no House of Lords (Lady Drogheda represented the peeresses), and the knights of the shire were conspicuously absent. The army had for once deserted the mimic Kriegsspiel, and, in point of fact, Capt. R. Mansfield, who enacted the part of master in the enforced absence of his brother, had little occasion for fear or misgiving about his hounds being either ridden over or stampeded on by a rushing crowd. Perhaps a very uninviting day had a good deal to say to this scarcity of pink in the vicinity of Blessington. The plateaus here are high, shelter is scarce, and an easterly wind was driving cold continuous rain in the faces of most of the sportsmen who rallied to the trysting place. Add to these deterrents the strong counter-attractions of the Curraghmore chases begun

to-day, a drag with the Newbridge harriers, the prudent retirement and rustication of the hunters reserved for the approaching Redcoat race next week, and the small assemblage is partly accounted for. It is soon entering the Downshire Park, a strange conglomeration of hills and hollows, on one verge of which stands the well-known gorse, just now incapable of harbouring a rabbit, much less a fox, seeing that it has only recently been cut down. Foxes, however, haunt the favourite and secluded neighbourhood, and put up with the shelter of odd furze brakes scattered through the park till their proper habitation is ready for their reception. These had been searched to-day without result, when Mr. F. Blacker saw a large dog fox (two vixens had been let into the earths) jump out of a ditch, got the hounds clapped on to him without delay, and the chase was soon speeding beyond the area of the park towards an earth near a chapel—up wind and very fast. The fox, finding no sanctuary here, sank the wind and went away at great pace in the direction of Eadestown, but was headed *en route* near the Red Bog; he then essayed to regain the park, but his entry was barred by second horsemen and some sportsmen who had come on the scene rather late. A determined fox, though a baffled one, he once more faced the east wind, and those who rode near them had to extend their horses to keep their places till they reached the well-known wooded ravine of Tinode; while to those ever so little behind there was scant prospect of diminishing the interval, though beyond a fine big double there was nothing very formidable in the way of fencing, and the turf on this ridge of hills is as light and springy as on the Wiltshire downs. This wooded ravine is, I believe, full of rabbit holes—at any rate, it proved a haven of safety for our Reineke; and the plantations near the House of Tinode were not drawn, as there was an invalid there. So to Johnstown Kennedy we turned our horses' heads, in the certainty of a find there, and possibly a run. A run there was, but only on the hospitable baronet's eatables and potables, for no

fox turned up. The vixens were possibly let into the earths by the wily keeper; and if there were dog foxes about, we found no trace, so must apply the old canon of the schoolmen to them—*de non existentibus et de non apparentibus eadem est ratio.* Strangely enough, one of this masculine denomination, as we heard, had only last week forced himself into a pipe here, whether rat-hunting or not I cannot say, and got drowned or suffocated.

Turning to the Carlow and Island Hunt, on Monday last, when they met at Shrule Castle—a place which has been quite historical in the anals of the hunt of late years—I hear they had a very good hour and thirty minutes from the Shrule covert, by Cooper Hill, to Cappalug, where the last scene in a good fox's life took place. The first twenty minutes, which was at best pace, was fatal to his life chances, and, though he struggled on, he was a doomed fox from this point. In the previous week, when they met at Gorey, they had a very good fifty minutes from the first gorse they visited to Courtown, the park of the lord of that title; while a Camolin fox gave them a capital hour and thirty minutes afterwards.

On this same Monday Mr. Cosby, in the Queen's County, had a good semicircular run from Popefield towards the Carlow border, and thence to Rahan, where they killed their fox after an hour and a half patient hunting.

In Westmeath on Saturday last, Dunboden, Col. Cooper's residence, was the theatre of events. They found here, and had a short scurry from it to ground, if I recollect right. In the Lake Woods of Rochfort they found a second fox, whom they rolled over in something under the quarter of an hour while Gaybrook as usual, turned out a good fox, who took them along over a nice line by Catherinestown, but got to ground after twenty minutes. On Monday last they had a very smart thirty-five minutes from Crieve to Lunestown, where the fox got to ground.

In Limerick scent and sport seem to have returned to gild the closing scenes of Sir David Roche's campaign of 1876. Thus, on

the 24th, when the pack met at Frankfort, they found a rare good fox in Main Gorse, who led them along at fine hunting pace for upwards of ten miles (there was only a single check, and that a very slight one), beating them into Liskennett.

On Monday they found a fox in Inchirourk, bustled him at best pace over the light wall country for 40 minutes, when the hounds got a view, and soon broke him up. A bystander described this fox as the largest he had ever seen in a very long experience, and standing much higher than any of the bitches who had been hunting him—and Sir David's bitch pack, though full of bone and substance, are by no means deficient in height.

The gallop with the Ward Union hounds on Monday last was over a fine line, and the riding was all the pleasanter from not being overcrowded. From Culmullen the stag—by the way, it was an untried hind—bore up for the canal, *viâ* Larch Hill, which, singularly enough, did not detain her; and after this she crossed the Midland line somewhere near Ferns Lock, and held on towards Enfield, where she was taken. To strangers she thus gave glimpses of part of the cream of Meath, and the verge of Kildare's best country. Dublin was not reached till a late hour.

On the previous Saturday "Moynalvey," enlarged near Peacockstown, ran over a famous line by Ratoath, the Sutherland Brook, Garristown, and Newtown. On Wednesday last this pack met at Rathbeggan, and had a very good fifty minutes by Blackbull, Herbertstown, Ratoath, to Lagore, the scene of the capture. I hear this pack intend to avail themselves of the lateness of the season and to issue fresh lists.

On Wednesday evening those who looked westward saw a sky flushed with deepest crimson, which, with a steadily rising glass, boded well for hunting operations in Kildare on Thursday, the 30th, the penultimate day of their season. The meeting point was Spratstown Bridge, a time-honoured fixture, which somehow or other seems to have been strangely passed over in recent years. The trout stream which the bridge spans is not as it ought to be, the

Sprat—but if not the Greise itself, at any rate it is one of its principal tributaries. "A drowsy valley, musical with brooks," is here dominated by Ballintaggart Hill on one side, on the other by Spratstown Gorse Hill, and its bigger brother, which bears Matt's Gorse on its eastern slopes. The united parks of Ballynure and Grange Con close in one side of this pleasant but rather soft valley, and as you journeyed to the trysting place by their trees there was the cawing of innumerable rooks to be heard all round, and the cooing of the "quice" from "immemorial elms." The day was true to the presage of the sunset. "*Solem quis dicere falsum audeat*," says the poet of agriculture, and we pursuers are bound to honour his veracity, as well as the many farmers who have had no chances, or only rare ones this year, of preparing their acres for seed and roots. It was in every sense of the word a glorious day—warm and bright and luminous; but the eastern mountain peaks were candescent with newly fallen snow, as if to warn us that the glacial period had not wholly passed by. Considering that the nearest station to Spratstown Bridge is some twelve miles or thereabouts distant, the congregation was a very large one, and somewhat representative. There was a little field in itself of masters and ex-masters—Mr. Cosby, on Sampson; Major Dease, on Whitelaw; the Baron de Roebuck; Mr. Malone, from Westmeath; Mr. W. Kennedy, etc. Carlow was in strong force in the field, and Kildare was by no means sparsely represented, though a hard season has told its tale on many hunters, and not a few of the faster cracks and crocks are just now undergoing the mysterious agonies of preparation for the forthcoming Redcoat race, and are as jealously screened from vulgar inspection as the odalisques of the harem, or our own wives and daughters in the cages of St. Stephen's. By noon all who had any idea of time were posted on one side of Spratstown Gorse, nor did the red rover who harbours there detain them long, breaking away as if he meant to gain Nine-tree Hill Gorse, or the shelter of Narraghmore Woods. Presently, however, he inclined leftwards, and ran down

hill into a sort of swampy little valley, through which a brook or cutting meanders along sluggishly, its banks protected here and there by the usual wire fortification, but more by the soft ooze and slime which margin it in many, indeed in most, places. Fortunately, a causeway or two lead over it. Those who missed or despised these tracks fared, I believe, very ill and very dirtily; nor has the regular season for mud bathing commenced yet. Our fox seemed inclined to run for some Carlow sanctuary; but presently he shifted his course leftwards, and ran past the new covert of Ballynure, through part of the park, and thence onwards over reaches of large pastures, till he found himself in the wooded glen of Ballycor, a blown and beaten fox, apparently the lawful and easy prey of the pack, who were close to him, when he crept into some aperture, which for some unassigned—perhaps unassignable—reason was yawning open. This run occupied 21 minutes about as fast as hounds could race, partly up wind.

After this we trotted on through the pleasant and cheery village of Grange (whose squire brought a very large party as usual to the meet), till we were by the side of Knockrigg or Farmer's* Gorse, which is partly up and partly down, but has lots of holding covert for a brace of foxes remaining. Close under the gorse, too, is another swampy brook, of infamous memory to many a good hunter and smartly-turned-out pursuer; and why a rustic wooden bridge is not thrown over it I cannot conceive, as a single curb or strain to a wallowing, floundering hunter would prove far more costly than its erection and maintenance. Here, too, there was a fairly quick find, the fox running a track parallel to this brook or drain for a bit; then crossing it (we were fortunate in hitting on a good safe ford), and speeding over the Grange Road towards the hill gorse of Ballyhook. Scent was most propitious; so he had no time to enter the covert, but shot down, at great pace, into the beautiful valley of the Slaney below us, ran along the right bank of the river for some distance through the

* A covert presented to the Kildare Hunt by the farmers; hence the title.

lands of Saunders Grove, then, keeping to the right through the fields to Golden Fort, won his way back to his starting point, having covered a great deal of ground in the forty minutes or thereabouts of his absence from its sheltering recesses. It took no little time to eject him a second time, and then his career above ground was a brief one, as he found an open breeding earth not far from the Parsonage and of course incontinently availed himself of it. Trotting once more through the Grange, we come to "Grange Con," and that "sustentation fund" which neither laics nor clerics, established or disestablished, reverend or irreverend, can afford to treat lightly or pass by. It seemed a scene of what travellers in Western America always wonder at and enjoy mightily, on their first arrival there—"free lunch;" though there was no subsequent bar where the luncher, unless a "loafer," is expected to do something handsome for the house in the consumption of "oaths," "smiles," and such like subtle combinations of "Bourbon" or peach brandy. After this, Matt's Gorse, whence a gallery of rustics had surveyed our earlier proceedings, was drawn, and kept us at attention for a time as a fox was spoken to; but it was probably one who was seen leaving it by the pedestrians. From this point we passed by Ballintaggart covert (not drawn for some agricultural reasons), and are drawn up in line by Hatfield Gorse, the starting point of a very fine hunting run which I sent your columns some ten or fourteen days ago. In a few moments a fox is seen crossing a ploughed field (the only one visible) at the far side of the covert, and making his way apparently over precisely the same line as on the previous occasion I referred to. Somebody recognises him too—a small low fox. Once across the Dunlavin Road, however, whether headed or not, something or somebody made him shift his course, and he is seen by us on the road racing across the water meadows and swamps from which the Bowery islands emerge. No time has he to enter their inviting thickets of gorse; scent is serving, and the hounds are not far behind him; so he sweeps by them,

and takes his course up a bit of hill to the right, and thence straight onwards through the large grass fields of Logatrina, as if minded to hold on through Tober for Cryhelp or Ardenode. Another turn, however, to the left brings him through the grassy slopes opposite Thornton into Grange Beg, over its lowlands, past the house, and on to the Uplands, the scent continuing very strong, the pace most sustained. Horses are beginning to sob now, and condition tells it tale. An officer of the 5th Dragoon Guards has a narrow escape as he gallops through a screening plantation, and gets knocked clean off his hunter by a bough. There is a wide ditch and high bank to be done before you can get on to the road, and, with a blown, tired horse, bank and ditch don't look smaller or more inviting. I see Mr. Forbes's brown horse Cupid and some few more doing it beautifully. However, a friendly gate is soon spotted a short distance off, and this helps some of the beaten brigade. Now the line takes us over the Brannoxtown mail-cart road, up into some high grass fields, strongly banked—every bank harder to surmount than its predecessor, as horses struggling upwards have less power and wind to spare for the effort. Refusals increase; and the ridge fence which crowns the hill line—a high bank overgrown with furze—has a number of objecting steeds on the wrong side of the barrier. Patience, coaxing, and leading over help owners to the far side. There is no hurry now; scent seems wavering and waning, and from this point we may bid farewell to a day of very fine, sterling sport.

The dwellers by the fertile banks of the Liffey had a pleasant hour on Friday with the Newbridge harriers, spent principally in mazy gyrations of which Gingerstown and Carragh were the pivots. The pleasant pastime over, the human current set irresistibly strong for the metropolis; for Col. Frank Chaplin, Mrs. Chaplin, and the officers of that sporting corps the 4th Dragoon Guards—whose performances in the hunting grounds of Kildare, Meath, and Dublin have often aided and enlivened my hebdo-

madal chronicle of sport—had organised a dancing festa that evening, on a scale almost colossal, in that obsolete temple of Terpsichore, "the Rotundo" of Dublin, which has been as desolate and dreary since the Exhibition glass house sprang up like a mushroom, as the Ossianic halls of Ivor or your own Colosseum. The corner stone of the social arch in Ireland is foxhunting, and, as Iago was nothing if not critical, so men and women are bound in this our green isle to be more or less *fanatici per la caccia*, and to assume an enthusiasm if they feel it not. But the fervour was true and genuine in the preponderating majority of the many hundred guests whom the 4th had bidden to this magnificient dancing function, and war and war's image trod their merry measures like twin souls. All balls have a strong family likeness. It is for genius and invention to stamp character and individuality on these assemblies, and this was done most effectually by a Bivouac tableau, with real guns and real gunners, brought out strongly *en évidence.* Always a popular institution in Ireland, the 4th have done their best to increase this feeling towards the army, and the Commander-in-chief will always find officers while men and women love dancing in halls of light and splendour. I heard of one or two sportsmen who danced till the hours began to wax large again, and went down to the Kildare hunting grounds by the 6 A.M. train, to ride trials for the forthcoming Redcoat race, which is occupying as much local attention as the Two Thousand Guineas or the Derby, nay more.

The 9.30 A.M train from King's Bridge brought a large freight to Sallins to witness the closing scene of Kildare's hunting episodes for this season. It was fortunate for the later and dancing divison that a fast train followed at 10.30. This too was crowded with pursuers, ablaze with scarlet or clad in the soberer livery of the chase. The occasion which filled the carriages of the Great Southern and Western line with so goodly an array of pursuers was the ultimate meet of the Kildare hounds

at Johnstown Inn, the circle of fixtures, which began at this point in November, thus completing itself on the 1st of April. If numbers and quality be any test of popularity, these Kildare hounds must be enormous favourites, for the gathering to-day attained proportions seldom reached by any pack at any part of the season, much less at its close. The Bays' coach had brought a large load from Newbridge and the Curragh. A large proportion of last night's revellers turned out for a pick-me-up. Some of those who had not found Mr. Jorrocks's estimate of the perils of the chase quite appropriate to their own case had come out of hospital for the occasion, among them Col. Fraser, V.C., whom a broken arm detained from the Meath array for many weeks. In brief let me say that the mouldy old crusaders who feebly support the Mayo Arms in Johnstown, and who looked as if the east wind had not agreed with their constitutions or clothes, never perhaps in their long experience witnessed a more notable or imposing assemblage than this day's. The sun is gleaming brightly, every pool and lake like a mirror. The air is light and buoyant; the time is the noontide hour; and, once more standing on the ancient ways, we are entering Kerdiffstown demesne, and trying its trusty stick and gorse covert, this time in vain. An hour, or more than half certainly, is spent not unpleasantly in trying screens and plantations in the neighbouring Palmerstown, but without success, though our tour in the park gave us many views of the new house which a sympathetic nation is erecting in tribute to the memory of one of her tried and well-proved sons, untimely carried off in the discharge of duty. A couple of miles brings us to Eadestown Little Gorse, which I have so often described that I will only say that 'twas true and consistent to the last, furnishing us with at least a brace of foxes. One, a vixen, was spared; the other was hunted, with seemingly low scent, over a bit of plough, across a road, and on to a series of small grass fields, with fences requiring a hunter's precision. Here the bouquet inproves greatly and, jumping over a bank and ditch into the Blessington Road,

we see the hounds racing towards Tipper Covert. Grass is here the only track! It is light and sound, and heavy weights and light weights can send their horses along to their heart's content. Another road is now crossed, and the pack, bustling by Forenaghts Plantations, are now speeding away over low grass lands, watered by many brooklets, towards Old Town, (in one of these becks a hard-riding major finds an involuntary muddy tub,) but just as things are looking like a good run, "who-whoop! who-whoop!" the fox has gone to ground in a hole or earth which yawned wide for his reception in a privet-set bank. Fifteen minutes or so, very fast! and if you look you will see outpaced stragglers approaching from far distant fields.

> Alas! such sweet things should be fleet,
> Such fleet things sweet!

The next scene is by Punchestown Gorse; a fairly quick find; the hounds taken off their noses by a most impatient and impetuous crowd; a deal of lifting and most unsatisfactory hunting, though much *dilettante* steeplechasing for the *polloi*. The fox pointed first for the hills, then, racing round the gorse, emerged as if to run over Keely's Farm, then took a line parallel to the stand, by the furzy hillocks, and presently was handsomely lost near the first brook of the Punchestown Racecourse (a false holloa the immediate cause), and not recovered till near Eadestown, when nothing much could be done with him. Horses had seldom more schooling over walls than here, where they repeated themselves often. The sun has now grown positively hot; red coats seem intempestive anachronisms. Spring and summer would appear to have come upon us *d'emblée*. This weather, luxurious as it is, tolls the knell of foxhunting. We are presently by Elverstown Gorse—raised by many feet from our last standpoint; part of it is cut down, but still there is an immense green area clothing half a hillside and a ravine. "Des cris d'allégresse," as a Frenchman would say, tell us of a find. An hour, or the best part of it, is cut into by the eviction process, and yet scent

is by no means bad. Headed at one or two points by curious rustics, it looked as if "time and the hour" would prove his firm fast friend; but at last he breaks resolutely hillwards, giving those on the Naas side of the gorge no easy task to catch the hounds racing up the far slope. But the grass is all light here and springy, and horses can gallop over it freely, while the banks are not too large or too trappy. Leaving Russboro' to the right, our fox races towards Blessington, gleaming white in the vale below, then turns round the base of Slieve Rhue Hill, crosses a high road, and presently enters the Downshire Park—a painful pilgrimage for those over fourteen stone, as hills and hollows now predominate. I believe he was run to ground or lost in another half-mile, for here I left the pack at a crawl.

No one saw more of the hounds to-day than Mr. Malone, of Western Meath, on a very clever weight carrier. Lord Clonmell enacted the part of M.F.H. most zealously and efficiently during the day, Mr Mansfield being still an invalid. His lordship, to the general regret, will be an absentee from the Redcoat races on the 3rd, a division in the Lords' House the cause—*noblesse oblige*, you know. The closing spectacle is georgeously magnificent; the western sky all crimson and maize. The reflected light bring out the bronze hues of the lower eastern hills, and purples their snow-clad summits and rifted sides The hunting theatre spreads itself out before us luminously clear in the afterglow, a brighter emerald twinkling in the grass. Ye banks and braes, *valete*!

The abstract and brief chronicle of hunting in Louth is much as follows: On Tuesday, the 28th, meeting at Pepperstown Cross, they drew Lisrenny, and ran their first fox into a sewer into which a new opening had been made.

In Clonbracton several foxes turned up. One was soon sent off towards Cortown, under the village of Drumcondra, and thence Meathwards, pointing for Whitewood, but was given up from coldness of scent. A brace was found in Churchtown, and one of them was rolled over after a brilliant quarter of an hour.

On the 31st they were at Julianstown, and found at Ballygarth, running their fox under Greenhills into Gormanstown, then round the park for 20 minutes, and on towards Whitestown, where he was headed and lost.

The first fox found at Hilltown in the afternoon was run to ground very soon; the second went away, leaving Carnes on the right by Newtown, and on to Cromwell's Bush, by Mickmanstown, into Harbourstown; 25 minutes up to this point. Then followed some slow demesne hunting, the hounds at last forcing him out over Saddlestown, under Mullatela, by Leggan Hall, and so back to Hilltown, just one hour after he had left it. After pressing him for 15 minutes more, through the pastures here, he beat the pack into a burrow. The lengthening tail and muddy coats bore ample testimony to the extreme severity of the second stage of this fine circular gallop, one of the best of the season, though uncrowned by a kill, and wanting the charm of directness; it could not have been much under ten miles.

In my next letter I propose to send you details of the Kildare Redcoat Race, and a review of sport in the many still-hunting shires of Ireland.

I regret to have to condense my notice of Meath sport last week. The précis will run somewhat thus: On the 28th they had a smart run over a rough bit of country from Robinstown into Ryndville, and a capital eighteen minutes from Moneymore afterwards. On the 30th they had a fashionable meet at Arch Hall, but found no fox at either the hill of Balsan or the Decoy. In Mountainstown they had a park run and a kill. From Gibstown they had a very fine ring by Felltown, killing their fox handsomely by the edge of the lake at Randlestown in view of a terrace full of ladies. On Friday they were at Philpotstown, and drew Tullaghnahogue, home ever of long-running foxes, as not a few exhausted hunters have found out this season. A good one issued from it to day, who stood up for two hours,

running a wide ring by Meadstown and Trim, till he got to ground near home. On Saturday, April 1, meeting at Archerstown, they had a short thing from Kilgar, by Killallon and back, and a good twenty minutes from Knockrath, by Drumleary, to near Crossdrum.

April 15*th*, 1876.

Est in secessu longo locus.

The Great Southern and Western Line cuts the hunting territory of Kildare into two very different kinds of hemispheres. On the right hand, as you journey from Dublin to Cork, it is interrupted vale for several square leagues, stretching away into Meath, where a series of gentle undulations diversifies the monotonous flatness. On the left, after passing the level margin by the side of the metals, which varies in breadth from one mile to three, you are introduced, after a few weeks' hunting experience, to a series of hills and basins and valleys, which have all a strong family resemblance, but vary considerably in extent. As a rule, the eye meets none of the umber tints of newly turned-up soil in the entire extent of the hunting grounds which are embraced by your horizon. Grass predominates in more than Falstaffian proportions. Another feature which cannot fail to arrest a stranger's or traveller's observation is the infinite dearth of timber and hedgerow and shade, on the greater part of the left hand country. Both of these divisions have their fautors and admirers; but, as a rule, the light men admire the wavy up and down lines of the water-shed lands. The heavy brigade evince a decided partiality to the richer and more alluvial flats, where, though the fences may be broader and deeper, they are not constantly reminded of the too too solid flesh, and that "mediæval spread" which an easy conscience, the absence of cares, and a country life are too apt to develope in excess, nor do they get heart-broken by

finding, when they have painfully ascended a hill, that the hounds have run across the intervening vale, and are climbing up the opposite steep, with only a few light-weight men on their track, looking in the receding distance like bright-bodied flies scaling a wall.

This very sketchy outline of cis-rail and trans-rail Kildare (taking, say, Naas, the capital, for your standpoint) will lead discriminating judges of horses and their capabilities to select the far side as the more likely arena for hippic contests, as naturally better galloping ground, and calling forth the vlrtues of stretch and staying and large jumping in a higher degree than the more rough-and-tumble sort of pastures and scrambling fences which are met with in traversing the near country. All these considerations, and many others, had occurred to the judicious heads to whom has been assigned the task of laying out, annually or biennially, the Kildare Redcoat racecourse during the last five years. The first year they hit upon a very pleasant arena near the good covert of Rathcoffey—fine galloping ground, large fields, sound fences; but unfortunately the gallery, a small one then comparatively, had a very bad time of it, and only gained occasional glimpses of the centaur agonists by galloping up and down bye-roads and lanes, to the sacrifice generally of a view of the finish.

A long elliptically-shaped valley, watered by many becks, brooklets, and dominated by Kill Hill on one side, by Kilteel (both fox coverts) on the other, was next tried for two years in succession, with great success so far as riders and the public were concerned. But, for obvious reasons, it is expedient to vary the theatre, and next year Oughterard Hill gave a capital view of the scarlet and white brigade as they wound round some four miles of the valley below, finishing just under the hill, which was, to compare great things with small, a miniature edition of the famous Epsom hill, eliminating Cockneydom and the *nullæ bene nuptæ marito* who do not light funereal pyres when an inconstant

Æneas goes to sea, or goes to the dogs. This was perhaps, all things considered, a very perfect course; there was a repetition of fences in a few places, which put the mere chaser out of court; and yet there was good scope for galloping in the early and last stages. Why it was not persevered with for a second year I cannot tell, as all parties extolled it. But perhaps it was fairer to the county and its visitors to select a new line; at any rate, it was decided to do so. "Waywardens" were appointed, and it is saying much in their praise to assert that, if they did not improve on last year's form, they did not in any way deteriorate from it. I spoke of the valley overlooked by Kill and Kilteel Hills, close to it; but a mile or so nearer Dublin in another little valley or basin, bounded at one end (the sou'-western) by the trees of Bishopscourt; while Oughterard Hill, Cullen's Hill, and the deer park of Lyons shut it in on the north, and Pigeon Hill, an oval-shaped natural gorse-grown hummock, incloses it on the east. Naturally a swampy-holding vale, much has been done in the way of drainage, and the streams which intersect it have been utilised considerably for the purpose. Still, parts of it were spongy enough and water-soddened, and required a well-prepared hunter to gallop over it at anything like pace. The obstacles were not so formidable as those of former years, but three or four were decidedly large, notably the double, a field or two from the run in, which, for the benefit of Saxon readers who have visited and walked over Punchestown, I may state was a great deal larger than the similar fence there, which has been so often immortalised in the ink of the printer and the oils of the painter. The vale itself not being large enough to give a circuit of four miles and upwards, part of the track was along the shoulder of Pigeon Hill, and here a small wall interposed itself, the only fence of the sort in the entire extent. The last barrier was a fairly wide bank, with a formidable ditch on the landing side, which had been recently cleaned out, and looked most uninviting. After this came a short run home—the winning post, a most inartistic affair,

being in the middle of a wide pasture flanked by a huge barrier of drags, omnibuses, phaetons, and wheels of all sorts and sizes. There was a small inclosure, where the Marquis of Drogheda, assisted by Mr. Gray, presided over the weights and scales; and, considering that most of the performers were amateurs, the weighing was got through wonderfully quickly. The day was overcast, and a rising west wind seemed likely to bring rain in its train; but its early stages were most enjoyable, and the air was soft and balmy; the country had thrown off or evaporated much of its superficial water, and the galloping about from point to point was a perfect treat.

To give your readers anything like a *catalogue raisonné* of the rank and fashion—the queens of beauty, the queens of clothes—who graced the slopes to-day, and were seen presently jumping doubles and singles in all the ardour of sight-seeing, were a task beyond my powers of memory and observation. In brief, I may state that not only Kildare and its Curragh, but most of the border counties and the metropolis, sent parties to the gay scene, and that the *coup d'œil* was very animated and kaleidoscopic. A bold peasantry too, its country's pride, showed no sign of decay or minishing. There were many magistrates present, deputy-lieutenants, and custodes rotulorum—whatever the latter may mean—but never a policeman did I see, though the inevitable intruding dog was present in the run home, only waiting for his truncheon. Gentles we had as witnesses in clouds, nobles in fair numbers; royalty was wanting to round the pageant to full completeness, but royalty in Ireland would be phenomenal, though the sport there is often regal.

It was supposed that a certain mystery would lend an extra charm to the denouement; so for that purpose the meeting point was fixed for Kill village at noon, and from that place the riders and the gallery were conducted by the "proper authorities" past Bishopscourt House to the gate leading to the arena. Racing means gate-money nowadays, and gate-money means racing; so

'twere needless to say toll was exacted from horses and carriages, but it was very trifling in amount. Punctuality at these meetings is seldom rigidly enforced, but wherever Lord Drogheda officiates tardiness finds limits. To-day precision was relaxed in favour of Mr. Brunskill, an officer quartered at the Curragh, whose horse, known to have started on the road all right, had not turned up; nor, indeed, did he make his appearance at all till the fun was over—a pity, because the horse was much fancied, and carried his owner right well in the hunting field.

"The Talent" so named, having no call upon their lungs this day, came here in small numbers, to ply their vocation upon the enthusiasts. I do not think they made a very golden harvest, as speculation was dull, and the prices offered were untemptingly short. Mr. Forbes's illness, or rather the effects of his recent accident, put Hock, a hunter of the highest calibre, and twice a winner in the 14-stone class, out of court. The House of Lords exacted the attendance of the Lord of Bishopscourt; so neither did his good-looking hunters form a cynosure for admiration, nor were hungry men and women bidden, in the cheeriest of tones and the pleasantest of manners, to a hospitable tent and a first-class menu. Mr. A. Macneile's Grey Stockings remained in Meath, and Mr. Maher's fine hunter did not show. With these exceptions and that of Mr. Percy La Touche's Gondola, all expected came to the post. Col. Forster, master of the horse (in more senses than one), took half a score of the 12-stoners, at about two o'clock, to the starting point, less than a quarter of a mile from the judge's ideal chair, and, getting them into a well-dressed line with a nice tact, the result of much cavalry practice, sent them off to a capital start, and all jumped the wide preliminary fence in beautiful style, and very evenly. Capt. Aubertin, of the Bays, on Culmullen, then diverged a long way to the right, through some error in vision or misdirection, jumped something like an oxer *solus coram populo*, and thereby lost some ground too early to make up easily. With this excep-

tion the lot kept together nicely, led by Sweet Pea, who, from winning this race last year, was installed first favourite, for the best part of a mile. After this the race was never much in doubt; for, though Mr. Percy La Touche, on Wiry Sal, kept near his party, it was only a question of standing up, and she won without strain or effort. This mare, ridden all last season by the huntsman of the Newbridge harriers, and by her owner in this with the Kildare hounds, was brought out remarkably well, and is a thorough good huntress, as well as something more to boot. Her rider has been generally in the first rank of pursuit in every county he has visited (when not on his back), and, as a son of Mr. J. La Touche, *ci-devant* master of the Kildare hounds, and grandson of Rose Price, of Billesdon Coplow ballad fame, was bound by pedigree and tradition to ride as well as he did, and does.

In the 14-stone class, Simon, ridden by Capt. Auberin, from his running last year, when he carried Gen. Seymour to the front nearly all the journey, was installed favourite; though Mr. Hamilton Stubber's Younger Son (whom I frequently noticed in my weekly jottings) looked more like chasing under welter impost. Mr. Blacker's Snow Storm was known to be a first-class fencer, but his pace was not suspected. Col. Forster was equally happy in starting the squadron, who, led alternately by Mr. Lister Kay's Change and Mr. Hamilton's Garryowen, went away, after a field or two, much faster than their lighter brethren. The pair then succumbed, while the Hon. C. Fowler's Crown Prince slipped his saddle. After the ridge-and-furrow field, Simon looked all over a winner, but, collared presently by Snow Storm and Younger Son, gave way to their superior finishing stamina. The latter was disappointed in coming up, and finished only second to Snow Storm, who, having gone on the wrong side of a flag near home, was disqualified. Major the Hon. E. Lawless's Ecossais, the winner of last year in the heavy brigade, had been injured a few days previously, and was very short of work, and

his staying with the leaders all through stamped him as a rare good horse. Two farmers' races were won with ridiculous ease by Mr. Lalor's Grey Plover, spite of certain eccentricities of temper. In the first he was ridden by Will Freeman, the Kildare huntsman, of whom some one remarked "that where there's a Will there's a way;" in the latter by his sporting owner. A beautiful forenoon and afternoon ended in a diluvial downpour.

On Tuesday Summerhill, in Meath, contended vainly with the irresistible human tide which set for the Peninsular hippic games known as the Howth and Baldoyle Spring Meeting. As it is a speculative enterprise, somewhat ambitiously started, and was in its initial stages a sort of Tom Tiddler's ground, whence very indifferent horses bore home loads of bullion, it is regrettable that the patronage and attendance were so lamentably small. The garrison of Dublin—emphatically the 60th Rifles, the 4th Dragoon Guards, and the 17th Lancers—spread tables in the sandy wilderness, and refreshed the hearts and souls of winners and losers alike by their genial hospitality. They would have led a foreigner (say a travelling Osmanli) to suppose that champagne, not whisky, was the *vin du pays* in Ireland. Two days' racing introduced one to few taking horses, notable exceptions being found in Herberstown and Chivalrous (alias Almadine), who, having little to beat, did it well.

The third day at Baldoyle (if anyone did actually go three days consecutively) was the festa of the 17th Lancers and 4th Dragoon Guards. I hear the luncheons were better than the racing, though the pony contest was of higher class.

There is just now a question in agitation about the future of that great space in southern Dublin named from the protomartyr St. Stephen. Why not make it a metropolitan hippodrome? The Vartry water, introduced into a cutting, would form a brook in ten minutes, and I daresay the thinnings of the shrubberies would make all the obstacles necessary to tickle the public fancy and eager eye. I commend the notion to the owners of house property near this magnificent quadrilateral.

The tide of racing is now at flood in Ireland; in the words of the national poet,

> Like the waves of the summer; as one dies away,
> Another as bright and as shining comes on,

On Friday the Queen's Bays have their regimental meeting at Newbridge, adding *pro bono publico* an open hunters' race; *pro bono agricolarum*, a farmers' purse. On Saturday comes the Down Royal Maze meeting (rather a mouthful by the way) with, what concerns hunting men, a cup for 15st. genuine hunters, another for light-weight hunters, and a redcoat tournament afterwards. Truly a busy week, and Sir Benjamin and Lady Chapman made one night of it pleasant and beautiful by a charmingly organised ball in the Exhibition Palace, where the microcosm of hunting danced and did all they ought to do. In Lord Clanmorris, who died last Wednesday, the hunting world of Ireland, especially its western section, has lost a zealous friend and supporter, while the smaller world of his intimates and relatives has sustained an irreparable loss. Out hunting—though only on wheels—with his brother-in-law's (Mr. Burton Persse's) hounds last week, no one who saw him had any idea that the hand of fate was so near. A chill caught that day was, I believe, the proximate cause of an untimely death. Galway has many good "all round" sportsmen, as the phrase goes, few keener than the deceased peer; few will be more universally regretted.

The weather, which has been so pleasant to the race-going picnicking world, has not been so favourable by any means to the minority who have spurned vain delights and lived laborious days the last days given them for participating in the sport. The going is still admirable, for it would take many a score of sunny days to evaporate the moisture of the past season; but scent has not been generally propitious, and the thousand and one chances which mar hunting have been in the ascendant. But if ever it has been permitted to the race of foxhunters to be

Vincent Brooks Day & Son, Lith.

HUNTING SEASON OVER. NOW FOR A SUMMERS REST.

satisfied with the accessories of the chase in their highest perfection, without much of the real spirit-stirring impulse, the last ten days have been the fittest occasion for indulging in that frame of mind which the wisest of Orientals tells us is better than a continual feast. After a Canadian winter we are treated to a Canadian spring, with its almost miraculous growth and universal burgeoning. The banks are galaxies of flowers below, and green bud above. The mavis in the linden and the wood pigeon in the elm proclaim the advent of spring. The air is velvety and all balm in the noontide hours, though later on a subacid easterliness reminds us that winter lingers sometimes in the lap of April as well as in that of May; and the dust, which is generally our portion in March and April, has been an absentee so far from road, racecourse, or plough.

On Tuesday the Meath hounds met at Summerhill, Lord Langford's park, ever peopled with foxes, of whom not a few have shown decided stoutness this season; but to-day, beyond tacking between the park and Agher, they were not highly tried. Garradice was next visited, and its gorse was not empty, the fox running the very beaten track towards Fern Lock, and, eventually, I believe, lost. A sharp but very short gallop from Beltrasna to Culmullen wound up the day. On the next meeting, at Trim station, they drew Moneymore, and, finding there, forced their fox through Dangan to some furzy hills, when, as they were rolling him over, a fresh fox jumped up and engaged nearly all the pack, only a few couple remaining to despatch their victim. This second was hunted past the Bullring, by Rainstown House, through Agher, into Summerhill, where foxes were changed, the new one being taken on with very wavering scent towards Culmullen, till abandoned; about seventy minutes in all. The next day produced a ring from Bloomsbury by Charlesfort and Allenstown.

The Newcastle Harriers, owned by Mr. Coffey, take their nomenclature from a farm on the borders of Westmeath and the

King's county, which has been the birthplace and playground of many a celebrity in the chasing world—a fact that I make no doubt the leviathan Capt. Machell would endorse. The pack, taken down last Tuesday to Mosstown in the lower or Connaught side of the Westmeath hunting grounds gave a large field a capital hour and a quarter, with a deer enlarged not far from Ballyrand, who took a twisting line by Moyvere and Shinglass, to the Hill of Duneel; his predecessor had, unfortunately, impaled himself on a spiked gate.

The Great Northern line proved itself a practical patron of the turf by the free conveyance of all horses who came to compete for the varied prizes offered at the Maze meeting on the 18th inst. Very attractive was the Hillsboro' Cup, offered for 15-stone real hunters—not race horses in disguise—ridden for two miles on the flat by hunting men who scaled a minimum of 12st. in racing costume. There was also a cup for lighter hunters, less fettered by conditions, and therefore open to a more suspicious class of competitors. The north-eastern coast line of Ireland is not very interesting or very picturesque, but the railway company give you ample scope for its study by the tortoise pace in which it traverses the dreary extent of prevailing tilth. Louth once past, you enter Ulster, and its portals are certainly the quintessence of bleakness and barrenness, as you wind your way under the shadow of the Newry and Mourne mountains; the land is poor to a degree, but supports a teeming population of hard-working, hard-living, small farmers, like the poet's *gens assueta malo.* Once Lord Lurgan's park is left behind, the Ban Valley, and shores of Lough Neagh, celebrated in song, open a brighter vista, and here is the hunting ground of the Killultagh Harriers, who show, I am told, good sport, and have a country not wholly unlike portions of Kilkenny and Waterford. Lisburn is the town next the Maze course, and here I determined to make my quarters, thinking that a city so flourishing and manufacturing must have ample hotel accommodation for the needs of a

day or two. At the first hostelry I visited I was inspected by the barmaid, who did not approve of my outer man—perhaps it was not sufficiently Bardolphian—and declared the house full; perhaps it was, but I hae ma doots. At the second the condition of staying as an inmate was to form a unit in a limitless liability company in a bedroom. At the third and last, having profited by experience, I took the two beds in a room, and, by paying double, got housed.

Lisburn is a well-built, comfortable sort of town, with an air of *bien-être* about it, though the proletarians look as if they had rather a hard time of it, and scant leisure for ablution, while the juveniles of this class—wanes and bairns, of course, not "childer," —all went bare-footed. The language betrays the history of the country—a bastard edition, not easily intelligible, of Lowland Scotch; and Hood's well-known line about Amsterdam or Rotterdam—"a sort of vulgar Venice, reminds me where I am"—is applicable to this section of Ireland, for a sort of minor Scotland reminds me too where I am. The year, young as yet, has not given birth to a lovelier dawn and forenoon than that of Saturday, the 8th. By 6 A.M. the heat was as of August, and a haze around the horizon indicated an accession; but a heavy dew had vivified everything, and nature was at her loveliest. The Maze course is situated in an irregular but extensive basin, and the highest points of the encircling rim, so to speak, are Hillsboro' Park (Lord Downshire's), with its graceful spire and monumental column, and the whinny hills of Killultagh, whereon a large amount of chasing will be witnessed next week! The track is more or less circular, a mile and seven furlongs in extent, and is just now in admirable condition, the result of the training and exercise gallops being done in an inner ring, shut off from the outer by a hunting bank and ditch. The large space inside these rings or zones is a mixed farm, seemingly well managed, with a good-looking homestead in the centre. Everything about the racecourse speaks of solid comfort, and means well and perma-

nently adapted to ends. For instance, the posts indicating the various distances are in solid carved stone. Besides the grand stand—which, though not so ambitious as that at the Curragh, looks quite as useful and substantial—a second one nearer the distance post had been recently put up, at the suggestion, I believe, of Capt. J. M'Calmont, who appears to be the *deus ex machinâ*, the great *impresario* of the north—Messrs. Clark, Topham, Verrall, Frail, and Co., all rolled into one. So far as I can judge by present results, his energy has done much, nearly fifty horses being located in the vicinity for the single day's racing, all seemingly well lodged at M'Kenna's, Conlan's, and the other training stables of this northern Newmarket. Judging by the early movements of cars and pedestrians to the course, I should imagine the population to be as fond of sport as the hard-working tykes, and the fact of the walls being placarded with posters announcing a dog show with £70 worth of prizes, besides cups and such like baubles, confirms this view. If my notion be correct, it would surely be prudent to make better arrangements for the accommodation of casual sight-seers and the strangers within their gates, unless they wish to localise their friendly contests. So far as I could judge by an early expedition coursewards, Mr. A. Macneil's, Capt. Montgomery's, and Mr. Dundas's horses are the favourites for the 15-stone flat race, though Mr. Gubbins's and Lord Fermoy's nags find favour with south-countrymen. These names have all appeared in your columns in connection with various hunting episodes, and their owners are pillars of the Irish Hunting State.

Anyone who stood in the main street of Lisburn about noon on Saturday, the 8th inst., saw a procession of miscellaneous wheels such as I'll warrant no other part of Ireland can equal—certainly not the metropolis, which lags far behind most capitals in the equipage department, though decidedly improving slightly with the age. The Belfast hackney looks as if he were no stranger to good keep. The team horses of the surrounding gentry were of

a very superior class, and horses and harness matched. I was particularly struck by a team driven by Mr. Bruce, and, of the quartette, by a very powerful off-wheeler. This northern meeting is incomparably the liveliest I have seen in Ireland, and forms a most refreshing contrast to the deadly-lively vapidness of the average Curragh celebrations. The hospitality was splendidly lavish. The Light-weight Hunter's Cup was carried off to Scotland by Vanity, a very smart hunter, the property of Mr. J. Miller, late of the 8th Hussars, whose moving accidents by flood and field, and occasional disastrous chances, I had often to chronicle in my weekly budget what time that sporting corps was quartered in its native soil. The parade of the 15-stone hunters for the Hillsboro' Cup was an interesting one to amateurs of welter horses, and among them were a few high-caste animals, notably the winner Porto Rico, Capt. Gubbins's Stranger, who was ridden by his owner a few pounds over weight, and Capt. Macneil's Viceroy. The race was run at a cracking pace, the impost considered—the tailing of all but the leading two showed that—and, by a curious coincidence, at least three of the gentlemen jocks are now, or had recently been, masters of hounds. The only *contretemps* to a very joyous meeting was a severe fall sustained by that most popular sportsman, Capt. J. Montgomery, his horse bolting over the rails, and hitting his rider in his fall when he sent him at the obstacle a second time to get back into the course. This occurred in starting for the Hillsboro' Cup, and the horse (Raker) — a first-class hunter — had exhibited his dislike to the performance by bolting in his preliminary canter. I should have stated that the Lagan river was as near the course as the Roodee water, though fended off by strong fences; and it would be ungracious not to make some mention of certain eccentrically-uniformed warriors, who looked as if an arquebuss or matchlock would have been their appropriate weapon. I interviewed one of these men of war, but found myself in the position of the late Emperor Napoleon when he received a deputation

from Cork, introduced by its mayor, who made a speech in what he conceived to be French, but which the great man, linguist as he was, took for Irish. I could not make out the warrior's reply to my query, but his button bore "Hillsboro' Fort" on its convex surface; and if this be one of the keys of our empire, I feel sure it will be adequately defended.

There is an old saw that, if April blow its horn, the result is good for hay and corn. A modern instance occurred on Sunday, when the resonant thunder brought down torrents of rain. On Monday the bleak north, which was genial as the sunny south on Saturday, resumed its normal temperature, and the crowds who gathered to the Whinny Hill to see the redcoat races and other chases there had a biting wind to face. I should here state that the Killultagh harriers, whose followers organise these sports, had, *on dit*, a most brilliant twenty minutes on Wednesday afternoon last.

The northern games concluded with two close and two open redcoat steeplechases—I do not mention a farmer's race, a rather poor affair as far as numbers went—on Monday, which were again, spite of the extreme cold (by contrast), most numerously and fashionably attended, the array of carriages, coaches, and cars being far larger than at a Curragh meeting, while pedestrians might be counted by the thousand. The Lagan valley is closed in towards the west by a ridge of wild hills, which near the city of Belfast swell up into large proportions. On one side, as you stood on the hill ridge, the great Lough Neagh stretched away for many a mile, and those familiar with Moore's melodies might recall his lines about the round towers of other days—a poetical licence, I fancy. In front are the Mourne Mountains, snow-crowned since Saturday, vindicating two proverbs more such as I alluded to just now: "A cold April the barn will fill," and "It is not April without a frosty crown." I understand these Killultagh races are an annual festival. The Hunt certainly deserves great credit for their liberal programme and the gift of two cups

to visitors and their hunters in the 12st. and 14st. classes. Not knowing the country, I cannot say whether the course is the best possible, but certainly it is well adapted for galloping purposes, being three miles, or perhaps more, through a valley, over a shoulder of a hill, with a finish—a long one too—near the starting point. The course was flagged with single flags, to be passed on the left; but it had two radical vices—the first, that the initial fence landed your horse in a bog, which disposed of the chances of no less than five horses; the second, that there was hardly an obstacle of average size and width to jump, though, margined as they were by tiny banks, they induced a clever hunter to change his feet on them instead of flying from field to field. Public form reasserted itself, Porto Rico and Vanity, who ran so well at the Maze on the flat, repeating their victories; while The Major and Claret won the local affairs—the latter an extremely neat horse, and evidently a good hunter and stayer. Of the hunters stripped there were, among a mass of very moderate class, a few nice animals—notably Sir Robert, a very smart grey, who has done good service to his owner on the northern circuit.

Thursday, the 6th, was quite a red-letter day in Louth—forty minutes to ground near "the Naul," and then an hour and twenty minutes from Knockbrack, over the Dublin country, crowned by a kill in the open. The hounds and hunt servants had to jog twenty miles before they reached their train for home.

In Carlow the seventeen minutes from Graney to Mr. Butler's Place, also crowned with a kill, was much enjoyed by the members of the hunt and the strangers out. The last bulletin about Capt. Montgomery is, I rejoice to say, favourable. The fatal termination of the accident is now, alas! a matter of history. Poor Rufus Montgomery's mantle has fallen on no successor; none could wear it like its late owner.

Lord Huntingdon had a good day on Friday, I hear—the

first gallop from the Pipemaker's Furze to Irishtown, when they killed; the second, from Clonkelly to ground at Lisduff.

April 22nd, 1876.

Uprouse ye then, my merry merry men,
This is our *closing* day.

On revient toujours à ses premiers amours is a verity as true in England or Ireland as in the land of the Gaul, and is as applicable to hunting as to the *grande passion* for which I take it the epigrammatist designed it originally. The Louth hounds had given me an extremely pleasant day in the earlier months of the season, and, as I knew they were having almost uninterruptedly good sport during the last fortnight, I concluded, as the Yankees phrase it, to pay them a farewell visit on the occasion of their meeting at Townley Hall on Thursday, the 13th instant, all circumstances being propitious, and the trysting place being very nigh a station (Drogheda), on my return from the "northern games" in the county Down, of which I sent you a sketch in my last budget of notes. There was a further attraction *en route*—or, if not precisely *en route*, not much more than a score of miles deviation from the iron highway—presented by the Redcoat races of the Meath Hunt, which were advertised for Wednesday, the 12th; to which (for the race is a private sweepstakes) I had received, with the liberal courtesy which characterises the hunt, an invitation not only to survey the scene, but to take part in the friendly contest if so minded. Circumstances prevented my taking either an active or passive part in the gay scene, which I regret all the more that the tantalising tidings have reached me from a very reliable quarter that the meeting was a perfect success, barring the inclement weather; the course, some four miles and a half, over grass uninterrupted, and the fences such as a man riding

a good horse for his life would desiderate; while the luncheons were of the pleasant sort to which the men of Meath, with true *camaraderie*, ever welcome the visitor and sojourner within their gates, especially if of the hunting guild and a votary of the great goddess Diana. Sixteen started together for the two prizes for twelve-stone and fourteen-stone hunters, and, I am told, at no crawling or even ordinary hunting pace. After much grief, tremendous tailing, and great weeding, three found themselves the best stayers, the best steered, or the most successful—Col. Fraser's Famous, ridden by Mr. Hopkins, beating Mr. Dundas's Delusion by a short length in the light-weight class; while next to them was Mr. Trotter's Cadet, who thus won the fourteen-stone prize, a brown mare of Capt. Butler's, whom I noticed in Louth a few months ago, being second in this class. It is somewhat of a coincidence that these three foremost horses were the property of pursuers who have come to Meath as visitors, and all, I think, last season. The outlook on Thursday morning was anything but cheering to any hunting sense. It had frozen hard during the night, and the snow, which had been buffeting one more or less during the last three days, had lain in consequence, and whitened the entire face of the ground. It is really hard for a foxhunter not to rail at the tender mercies of the weather and atmospheric dispensations this season! Afflictions sore long time we bore, and physicians were as vain to us as to the epitaphed lady—now frozen up, now snowed in, now blown about by hurricanes and semi-tornadoes. A week ago we seemed destined to have "respite and nepenthe" from these painful memories; the varied season of 1875–1876 likely to enjoy a glorious apotheosis; and not a few pursuers whose horses were still fresh and vigorous encouraged themselves in the belief that still "enough of light and life remained for some gay soarings yet." But the renewal of the glacial period has rudely dispelled these cherished hopes and aspirations. On Saturday, the 8th, every man and boy in the tillage fields was obeying in his sweltering personality the Virgilian pre-

cept, "Nudus ara seu nudus," in the sunny noontide. To-day and yesterday have been cold enough for Siberia and its exiles—just the sort of day that the old song describes when Araminta was intent on keeping her Lubin at home.

> The wife around her husband throws
> Her arms to make him stay;
> My dear, it rains, it hails, it blows,
> You must not hunt to-day.

Wives and husbands are cast in sterner mould in this century, and, at any rate at the end of the season, would hardly be frightened from a good meet by such weather portents—certainly not in Ireland, where the bloom on the cheek of beauty is not laid on by a cunning Canidia, Locusta, or Rachel of the period, and where rain and enamel are not natural enemies. So it proved in Louth on this most uninviting morning. The drive from Dundalk to Townley Hall introduces you, for the first seven or eight miles, to a beautifully cultivated plateau of preponderating plough, where the banks are faced with sharp, slate-like stones, every one of which would have furnished an offensive weapon to one of our ancestors in the prehistoric times, and which, as I noticed before, are deadly to horses not thoroughly accustomed to them. After passing the clean and thriving little town of Ardee, and the river (the Dee) which gives it the name and title, you ascend very gradually, by a well-engineered road, to a much higher level, where these sharp instruments no longer prevail, but the less frequent stones have been washed into the usual roundness by waves or other action. Collon is the next village passed—an extremely picturesque one, full of good houses, many of which would be coveted, in other localities, for hunting boxes. Oriel Temple, Lord Massareene's fine park, is just on the outskirts, and the gateway, with the cognisance of the mermaid combing out her yellow locks, is almost in the main street. It is a pleasant little town to look at, full of solid comfort, and abounding in the industries of grain and flax. On the right hand, before you enter the town, is a round clump

of trees crowning the hill of Oriel, said to be the highest point in the county; and, without ascending quite so many feet, the view from the road is sufficiently commanding, embracing the snow-capped Mourne Mountains, Dundalk Bay, the upper side of Meath, with Cavan and Monaghan to the northward. From Collon a winding road descends gradually towards the Boyne valley. Monasteraboice, with its perfect sample of a round tower and a Celtic cross, not unlike its fellow at Clonmacnoise, is passed on the left, and then in a mile or two, after skirting a nicely-wooded glen, the stately Boyne, rolling in full volume by Oldbridge breaks on the view.

> July the first, in Oldbridge Town there was a grievous battle,
> And many a man lay on the ground, for cannon they did rattle.

The obelisk, which commemorates the most important turning point in modern Irish story, once left behind, you come in a few yards to the gateway of Townley Hall. The hounds, some sixteen couple, with their aides-de-camp, Harry Hardy and Jack Corrin, are drawn up on the green sward opposite the lodge. Presently, as the clock would strike 11.30, if clock there were in the vicinity, Mr. and Mrs. Filgate, precisians in punctuality, drive up to the meeting point. The dozen or so who converge about this moment begin to compare notes about what the wild waves and winds have been doing the whole night long in their several countries, when it transpires that Louth, that we have hitherto pitied, was really a happy Goschen among snowed-up hunting grounds; that one locality had four inches of snow on its surface, another six, and so on. Let us glance at the assemblage for a moment. Mr. Thompson, of Newry, is one of the punctual division, though perhaps he had to start earlier than anyone else. He has always a good specimen of a welter horse under him, and his bay to-day was a very capable animal. With him was his friend Col. Reid, of Northumberland, riding a very good-stamped old grey from the same stable—quite good enough to contradict the poet's assertion that

Color est deterrimus albo.

The master, Mr. Filgate, has a chestnut and roan out for himself, own brothers, of the true useful sort, who with The Marine have done their duty well, and will do so again no doubt. Mrs. Filgate is on a liver-coloured chestnut, Allan-a-Dale, whose ragged hips and lean clever head bespeak a thorough workman, full of power. Mr. Gernon, of Athcarn Castle, has a strong, hunting-like horse under him, and Mr. Jameson's roan mare is a bye-word for all that is good in a huntress; but *there* is the incarnation of an old-school foxhunter in Mr. Coddington, of Oldbridge, whose hunting exploits are co-extensive with the annals of sport in Louth and Meath during the last thirty or forty years. He is on a very smart-looking brown horse, long and low, and nearly, if not quite, thoroughbred, that I believe once belonged to Capt. Greville Nugent's stud when M.F.H. of Westmeath. Mr. Dundas has ridden some fifteen or sixteen miles Irish from his quarters in Meath. In ten minutes more another division of pursuers troop in, evidently reassured as to the weather and snow; and operations begin by drawing the fine woodlands of Townley Hall—Mr. Balfour's park—where good timber and masses of laurels and rhododendrons, clothing a long dell, afford capital shelter to the fox family. The hounds soon found their game, and pushed him out seawards, in the direction of that glen which leads down to the Boyne Obelisk I alluded to just now. A snow shower had just fallen, and scent seemed of the liveliest, when our fox availed himself of an open chance of a burrow, and so ended the little excursion. More drawing of Townley Hall woods only revealed a drag more or less stale, and the hounds made next to nothing of it. Leaving this woodland, we soon discovered that our thin ranks had received considerable accessions, among the later arrivals being Mr. Frederick, of the Inniskillings, on his well-known tall bay hunter, whose timber-jumping proclivities I have often chronicled in my mention of the Kildare hounds and

their followers. Several ladies appear on the scene, undaunted by the menace of black cloud columns athwart the sky, which broke over every now and then in snow and hail; among them, three Miss Gradwells, Mrs. and Miss Osborne, Miss Smith, etc. Dowth Hall was, I believe, the natural sequence to Townley Hall; but there was a rumour of poison having been laid for cur dogs in some border fields, and this was quite reason enough for avoiding the dangerous territory; so we found ourselves presently on the edge of a beautiful-looking gorse, clothing both sides of a ravine known as Mellifont. This proved barren, and so did a small larch plantation, into which we heard that a fox had been tracked in the morning snow.

We are now on the borders of Meath, and our horses' heads are turned towards Slane in that county. Our path is over green fields, and a few flying fences, varied by a wall, give all an opportunity of jumping to their hearts' and horses' content, some doing the obstacles neatly, others in a more slovenly style; but after a mile or two we are at the foot of a high green ridge, on the southern side of which is a covert of some four or five acres of thick gorse, with great boulder bosses protruding from it. Grange Geath is its name. This is, I believe, a neutral covert, drawn by both the Louth and Meath Hunts, but to whom it actually belongs I cannot say. The latter hunt drew it, I hear, twice this season, unfortunately chopping their fox on each occasion. The hounds had not been in its depths five minutes before they were very busy with a light-coloured little fox, giving the heavier men, who had led their hunters up the steep hill slope, barely time to get into their saddles. His first effort to break away was towards Slane Wood, and in this he was baulked by some grooms or second horsemen. The next essay was more happy, and presently we were descending the slope, the hounds running rather slowly under us, as if for Mellifont. After a minute or two the pace improves, the fox bears a bit to the left, and we are galloping over the grass fields and small fences in two parallel divisions, one considerably to the right, the other to

the left—Mr. Hudson leading one, so far as I could see, Mr. Frederick the other; the wind is from the north-east, and the fox faces it bravely. In a minute or two more a larch plantation confronts us; but before we can get into it there is an up-bank and ditch to be done, not big by any means, but the viscous grass pastures had been very holding, and the gradient was getting severe. How others fared I know not, but presently I found myself sitting in a very moist spot, caressing my horse's neck and wondering if he would peg me down for any time He was a well-bred, well-mannered nag, though I think he had not the mission or vocation to jump high up-banks with a heavy weight on his back, and he kindly released me very soon from my perilous position; but in the meantime the hounds had raced down the slopes at the far side of the larch plantation (Bower's Wood), and taken their fox to the river which forms so important a factor in the prosperity of Collon village. The fox then sank the breeze, and, bearing on to the left as he had been inclining to do for some time, passed by Clogher Wood, the hill covert of Carrig-ma-Ghow, Newtown Fortescue village, and won his way back to Grange Geath Gorse, the point of his departure, and here he scratched himself into a rabbit hole of some sort. Thirty-five minutes, without the semblance of a check, very circular but very fast, and the last part was seen by not more than half a doxen—Messrs Tiernan, Blake, Thompson, Donovan, Frederick, etc., among whom for a long way, till her horse overjumped himself, was Mrs. Filgate. The number of those who saw nothing beyond the first stage of this gallop was considerable, and I have no doubt not a few did not realise at all what had become of the hounds and hunt till hours after all was over and the hounds were on their way back to kennel, for no more coverts were disturbed to-day, though the Oriel Temple Woods were temptingly near.

On the Tuesday preceding, this pack had a good woodland day at Cabra Castle, finding as many foxes as usual in this great stronghold; but the Saturday before that was exceptionally

brilliant, beginning with a fair thirty-eight minutes from Oriel Temple by Corles Castle, Lumley, and Marlay, where they sent their fox underground, and winding up with a very good forty-five minutes from Skedog by Shanliss House, along the Dee valley by Mainstown, Greenhills, and Acclare towards Footstown, where they rolled over their fox in the open. Jack Corrin, the second whip to this pack, is leaving Mr. Filgate at the end of this season, in hopes of promotion; a smart servant, with a good knowledge of his business, civil, obliging, and a first-class horseman, all wish him the success he merits.

Mr. Humphrey's harriers, metamorphosed into deer hounds *pro hâc vice*, gave the hard riders in Westmeath two good scurries—the first from the Loughnagar racecourse, by Cooksborough, to the chapel of Turin, some seven miles, done in good time, the second from Clonlost, over Knockshehan Hill towards Killucan, nearly the same distance, and a good line.

From Corrin Covert the United Hunt (Cork) are reported as having had a capital run last Monday, the line leading over Ballyoran, Killcraig, Glenrousk, Knock, into Modeligo, and thence to Ballyclough. The Newbridge harriers are giving the *désœuvrés* foxhunters of Kildare a few final drags "to finish the season." Theirs has been a right good one of forty-nine working days, in which they have killed seventy-eight hares.

Happy the hunt that expires gloriously, and whose last day is a rubrical memory, a thing to dwell on long and lovingly till the rolling months bring in a new season, with all its hopes, fears, and anticipations. Such was the fate of the Queen's County hunting corporation on its terminal day at Ballyroan; the cutting winds and intermittent snow storms hardly seemed the natural precursors of results so brilliant as those I am about to give you in mere outline. From the meet the cavalcade trotted to Derryfore, a gorse very famous in the Queen's County archives, and presently a fox is seen stealing into the open before a single hound had yet opened. He turned back very quickly, but broke again in about three

minutes in full view of the field, his head pointed towards Knockardegur. After going a few fields, however, headed or frightened by something, he ran back along the opposite side of a fence that he had just skirted, and recrossing it raced across Clontico, gaining Lennon's Gorse in twenty-three minutes. From this he was ejected without any delay, when he led his enemies over Legate's Hill, which he reached in forty-three minutes from his departure from Derryfore, and gained a haven of refuge in a friendly rabbit hole. The severity of the pace and some holding ground had told on most horses; but what will men not do and dare on last days? So the upper glens of Orchard were tried, but tried in vain; the Gorse, however, proved holding, a fox making from its northern side by Guichen, crossing the Stradbally-road, racing over Ballinteskin, where many horses were reduced to a trot; thence into the scrub covert of the Banker's Hill, across the Carlow-road into Cata Foley Wood (twenty-three minutes best pace up to this point), the remainder of the run was more interesting to houndsmen than hard riders, as it was mainly from one woodland to another, the wind-up being in Dunne's Scrub, after two hours and twelve minutes of steady hunting, when this stout fox got to ground. Scent was most serving all through.

Capt. Cosby's horses, I hear, go to the hammer at Sewell's after the next Baldoyle meeting (May 18 next), when those who want hunters—not flash impostors—will have a rare opportunity of selection.

The closing scenes of foxhunting in Westmeath were also such as will form pleasing recollections for all who witnessed them. The opening one is at Clondrisse, where Mr. Reynell, the field-master, entertained his friends at breakfast, and their name is legion. I may mention parenthetically here that Mr. Reynell is nephew of the immortal Sam, of whose Herculean labours in the cause of foxhunting in Ireland *Baily* of this month gives some slight sketch, as well as the outward presentment of the mighty Nimrod himself, whose hunting lexicon, if it gets into type, will be (I prophesy) as famous as was ever that of the great Samuel

Johnson. The meet was at Cooksborough in a snow storm, the result being ten minutes' covert hunting to ground (the keeper is probably very solicitous for his vixens). The Down's covert proved blank, and for once, to the surprise of all, so did Gaybrook. The early convivial operations had cut into the day, and it was four o'clock before Gaulston Park, Lord Kilmaine's residence, was reached, when another ten minutes were employed in the labours of that "sustentation fund" which clerics and laics find so needful. Fortunately for the feeders, the fox, who jumped out of the Bog Woods, ran right across the lawn in front of the house, taking a nice grass line, which led him nearly to Milltown, when he swung to the right and ran very fast up wind, being viewed as he jumped a double. This brought him back after a very fast circuit of twenty-five minutes to Gaulston; he did not, however, dwell a moment in his old haunts, but, brushing through an outlying covert, made his way to Gaybrook, by Martin's Town; here he raced past the earths, and, jumping the very high park wall, gained some four or five minutes' respite, as the hounds had to be taken through a gate. Scent was so warm that this delay did not slacken pursuit, which now led on towards Enniscoffy Church, past Lemon Grove House and Belfield, and so round once more to Gaulston, one hour and twenty-five minutes from the find. A fast ring round the park burst him up, and so ended the career of a very sporting fox! The field had dwindled down to half-a-dozen towards the end, and all horses and men bore tokens of the fierce fray, and among the chief sufferers was Mr. Malone. The entire distance is estimated at ten miles, most of it old grass land. This pack had a capital day's sport in the previous week; the 4th, when they killed the fox they found at Turbotstown in twenty minutes, all in the open; ran a fox from Packenham Hall, through Coolure to ground in Knock Ion; and had a third good run from Kanturk, of which I have not heard the particulars.

The Newbridge Harriers drew a very large number of the

foxhunters of Kildare to their drag in the vicinity of the Curragh (Pollardstown) on the 15th, while Mr. Walter's harriers occupied the higher country near Dunmurry, only two or three miles off. The day produced little noteworthy or remarkable, but was disastrous to Mr. Cassidy, of Monasterevan, who sustained a very severe fall on his head while riding with the latter pack. As it frequently fortunes, the mishap occurred at a very small place.

When Ostra, Norse goddess of light and life and spring, symbol peradventure of higher mysteries, arises and plants her throne in the firmament, Diana's fanes become emptied—her altars glow with feebler flames, and glory in fewer holocausts. This is our case now in Ireland. So far as external nature goes—and the internal nature of our sensations and feelings accords with it—we might easily hunt on for another month. Our Soractes are still snow-capped, and our gorse fox haunts are not, as usual at this season, a very cloth of gold, a glory of blossom, an exhalation of sweetest perfume. But then the *gravidæ matres*, the *cara soboles!* the state of our studs and stables, which for many a month must become infirmaries—Greenwich hospitals, in fact—for our halt and lame and hopelessly screwed-up hunters. And, worst of all, the fatal calendar warns us that we must this very week write "*finis*" after our hunting annals—that the "close" time is arrived, even though rare swallows have prevented the spring blossoms, and, wandering under our house-eaves perhaps in quest of their own early homes, have found nothing more inviting there than stalactites of ice.

Let me now give a short *précis* of the closing scenes in the great fox campaign of Meath, which has been decidedly the most important and the most successful in Ireland, though for about a month this pack wandered about like a ship in a calm, without any guiding, much less driving, scent. On Monday, the 3rd, they had a capital twenty minutes from Bengerstown, through Parsonstown, to Hussey's Gorse, where they killed. They had a second very fast gallop to the same point from a wild furze

brake; but, at the request and intercession of the field, the fox's life was spared. Tuesday, the 4th, was a good hound day at Summerhill, where foxes abounded, but not an exciting one for a hard-riding field. On the 5th the meet was at Trim Station, the first find at Moneymore, whence they rattled a fox at express speed, through Dangan to the Bull Ring, where they killed, but had not time to eat their fox, as a fresh one jumped up, and took them on to Summerhill. Then scent failed, but not till one hour and twenty minutes had been well spent in pursuit, the first twenty-eight minutes without a check. On the 6th they were at Bloomsbury Bridge, and found in the osier beds, getting away close to their fox, whom they sent at good pace through Hurdlestown for Allenstown, a nice bit of country, with lots of fencing. In Allenstown Woods the hounds divided (as there are always a number of foxes on foot here); but most of the pack stuck to their old love, and ran him through Charlesfort into Martry, where he got to ground. Charlesfort and Allenstown are very good lunch billets, as every hungry hunter knows, and the master allowed a short interval for the mid-day ordinance, when he drew the Hill of Faughan, which, with only a slight elevation, overlooks a very great area of level grass land. The fox left the covert before the hounds jumped the enclosure, and took them by Phœnixtown and Daly's Cross to the White Quarry, thence he swung to the right into Dornistown, when scent failed. On Saturday, the 8th, they were at Loughcrew, and raced a fox over Patrickstown Hill in full view; but he beat them, getting into a hole or burrow. On the 10th they were at Brittas, and had a sharp scurry from Whitewood to ground at Greggmore. Finding a second fox at Shanganah, they ran him towards Mullagh, where the land and fences bristled with sharp stones. Here Macbride's horse, as well as others, got injured, and the hounds were stopped.

The 12th was the date of their red-coat race to which I have before alluded, and which, to my great regret, I was unable to witness. *Honneur au courage malheureux!* I have named the

winners! Let me now state that the issue might possibly have been different had not Mr. Dunville, who was leading by a long distance, mistaken his way to a bridge which had been purposely made over an impracticable or almost impracticable fence, and that Mr. Dundas had to ride the last mile with a single stirrup. The master—who had won the lighter prize in this race two years with Mosquito, and was now on an untried animal—came down at a narrow back; while Lord Cloncurry, the single Kildare representative, was outpaced among the welters—no very astonishing circumstance if the horseshoe course was *really* four miles Irish in extent, for the leaders did it in thirteen minutes!

The last days of the United Hunt (Cork) have been uninterruptedly brilliant, and their season has closed with a pleased public, a fine stock of foxes, and an exchequer not exhausted. I alluded, I think, to their good day last Monday week from Leary's Cross, near Fermoy, in this budget. Let me recur to it again for a moment. In Fermoy Wood foxes abounded, but there was no scent to hunt them withal. Presently the rigour of the day mitigated, and Corin Hill was drawn. The result was a grand dog fox issuing from it with the hounds close to him, and a pauseless pursuit of seven or eight miles into Modeligo (Mr. Braddell's place), when a fresh fox jumped up, taking them into Ballyclough, Mr. Nason and Lord Listowel having led the field throughout. The following Wednesday they had a long slow hunting run from Knockeen to Kilsharrig; then, finding at Johnson's Plantations, and, getting away well with their fox, they raced him at top speed over a nice line into Kilmartin (Mr Victor Roche's place), where he got to ground, after a gallop of eight miles, Messrs. Nason, Montgomery, and Coppinger doing pioneering service all through.

The Ward Union Hunt are chasing the deer still over their peerless pastures; for be it remembered that, if Meath be, as it is now acknowledged by the highest authority, the finest hunting country in the known and civilized world, the Ward Union

"privilege" embraces the very cream and "paradise" of Meath. I am not going to chronicle any of their more recent triumphal processions, which are, all things considered, far more exciting in the witnessing and acting than the recital, *me saltem narratore;* but it would be ungracious, not to say unhistorical, not to allude if ever so cursorily to the splendid racing pageant which the Ward Union Hunt gave last Easter Monday *urbi et orbi.* Particulars and details will swell your columns this week; let me only glance here at one or two prominent features: Crammed railway carriages—twelve Irish miles of roadway from the metropolis resembling for the nonce, so far as wheel traffic goes, Bond Street or Regent Street in the season's height—a sea of humanity in the enclosures—every atom of space in the stands filled—admirable luncheons (*civil*, not *military*, for a wonder in this our Ireland)—not an observable hitch in the complicated machinery which moved these mighty masses without apparent effort or fuss. Mr. Leonard Morrogh and his brother stewards have deserved well of the world in general—of the hunting public in particular—for the grand stand was mainly occupied by this section of mankind and their weaker and more beautiful vessels. Conspicuous here was a celebrated ex-master of hounds, whose human face divine was patched up *from a recent fall over wire*, a noble lord and a famous welter weight, considerably the worst for their recent experiences with Mr. Humfrey's fast running staghounds. The racing was moderate, the fields bad—the farmers' race excepted, when twenty appeared at the starting post; but their quality may be judged by the pregnant fact that the winner, an Eclipse in this lot, was an aged grey Kildare huntress, who in her prime ran second in the Kildare red-coat race of her year.

April 29th, 1876.

Paloris Olympicus.

I am writing this conclusion to my season's 'Triviata' on the Monday before Puncheston—by the calendar the 24th of April. The day feels very like pronounced and decided summer. The fields have cast their slough of brown and white, and glow with richest emerald hues. Every bush and brake has put forth an array of vividly green fronds, and the seasonable showers of the last few days have not only killed the *aigre-doux* and searching properties of the keen spring air, but have further benefited race-goers and sight-seers by laying the dust clouds which had begun to menace the most frequented thoroughfares. Punchestown is its own parallel, and, though now clothed with the hoary antiquity of several decades, it can witness with philosophical calmness the ebb and flow, the rise and fluctuations, in the fortunes of many younger, more aspiring, and more pretentious rivals. Like hunting, of which it crowns the labours and forms the apotheosis, it may lay claim to the fascinations which were said to be the dowry of the much-loved, much-married Egyptian queen.

> Age cannot wither her nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety.

The Derby is a rallying point for men of every clime and nation under heaven, and as you walk up the hill from the Epsom station you will very likely hear the sonorous tone of Castille, the nasal accents of New England, and the gutturals of Germany mingling with the accents of Cockaigne. So it is in a minor degree with Punchestown. On the platform at King's Bridge you will not only listen to the diapason of broguedom let loose, but in the babel of tongues the ear will catch the Doric of Yorkshire, the Zuyder Zee patois of Western England, and the Attic smoothness and sharpness of the best-spoken Anglo-Saxon. It is cosmopolitan, or, if

not quite cosmopolitan, it is imperial, so far as the human element is concerned. That it should not attract greater varieties of the Arab race of horses seems just now the one matter of surprise and regret. The agonists are not only Irish of the Irish by training and association, but are a poor, small, and somewhat hackneyed sample of Irish horsedom! It was impossible to traverse the streets of Dublin at an early hour this morning without being very conscious that the mail steamer of the previous morning and evening had injected a horsy horde on the shores of Ireland, nor was it easy to hack along any of the roads which lead to the Punchestown Plains without acknowledging that, if the *concours hippique* (to borrow a Gallicism) has no other merit or glory, it may at least claim to perform yearly the function of an ædile—for whitewash and paint and varnish have been most liberally distributed all along every line where the invading army of chariots and cars is likely to pass. God bless the Duke of Argyll! may be true enough and apposite enough in Northern Britain; but God bless the Marquis of Drogheda! should be the refrain of the hundreds to whom Punchestown is an annual Pactolus, fertilising as the Nile, and much quicker in the returns of the good seed sown. It is surely no small thing for a cottager to make the yearly rent of his holding by hospitably entertaining two or three chasers, receiving sovereigns in lieu of "angels." It is no small thing for a farmer to be able to win a century or two, with small outlay and risk, by the galloping and jumping of a promising four-year-old. Punchestown is much pelted with high-sounding adjectives in the press of the country, the commonest of which is "princely." Let me depart from the beaten track of alliterates so far as to eschew this vocabulary, and let me call the great hippodrome "primæval"; for surely few courses have changed less with advancing civilization—few bear the imprint of modernism less forcibly stamped on them. As Punchestown is now, so, barring a grand stand and a few other engineering flourishes, might it have

been when the O'Carrolls and O'Tooles hunted the wild wolf from the Wicklow Hills over these undulating plains, on to the forests and swamps of Allen. I never was more impressed with the racy nationality of Punchestown than by the contrast which its very anticipation creates, when compared with the languid excitement of a Curragh *triduum* such as we have just gone through, and which even the newly-adopted hurdle racing failed to galvanise into an evanescent popularity and interest. Let others account for this phenomenon as they please; I merely record my impressions of patent facts.

My last notes closed with a cursory glance at the Fairy House chases, which the Ward Union executive have made so deservedly popular and such a firm metropolitan festa. The Wednesday following was commenced with a capital stag hunt, but their last fixtures, more especially Kilmoon, were looked forward to by hard-riding men as the closing *bonnes bouches* of the waning season, and horses were duly reserved and retained in hard fettle for these final celebrations. Alas for the *varium et mutabile semper* element of changing skies and atmospheric conditions! The card was issued when the earth was parched by east winds, and the grass had not yet begun to germinate; when rain fell copiously, the condition of the grass lands was totally changed, and, as the occupiers of these rich pastures had always proved most large-hearted and liberal to the Ward Union men, they in return agreed to sacrifice their much-coveted gallops to the grass weal; so Charlie Brindley has wound his horn for the last time this season, and the muckle red stags, if they only proved themselves good line runners and stayers, will æstivate in peace and plenty at Ashbourne.

Your columns this season have illustrated by several pregnant instances the extraordinary occasional ferocity of the foxhound when his killing instincts are fully roused, and, when like the Malay, he is temporarily blood-mad. Sir David Roche's hounds, the Limerick, will add another curious passage in hound

history. The facts were these: On Wednesday, April 12, the master and hunt servants had an early bye-day, unaccompanied by any field, and drew Graigue Wood, where they found a fox, and the hounds got away with him at once. A locked gate, which had to be forced, delayed Sir David and his men for a few instants and when they emerged into the open, sign or token of the pack there was none. At last some one told them they were racing away for Russ Wood, but when they reached it only four couple of hounds turned up, and the whereabouts of the main body was as great a problem as ever; nor was it solved till an hour's questing brought them to Mount Brown, where the hounds had run their fox to ground in a sewer, and the gory head of Dagon was all that remained of that good foxhunter. The supposition was that he had reached the sewer first, and occupying it in his frantic efforts to reach his quarry, had been torn limb from limb by the others. Barrier, another hound, was so injured that he had to be knocked on the head then and there. On the following Friday Sir David drew the same wood again, and found the same fox, who took the identical line over this sewer (now stopped), and was rolled over after a pursuit of some eight miles. Let us hope that the manes of Dagon and Barrier were appeased by the sacrifice. This pack has not been blessed with a favourable season by any means. Scent lay well on some days in the rich vale pastures, but the moment the thin-soiled hills were reached it became catchy and baffling. In spite of these drawbacks, they have killed twenty-one brace of foxes, which may sound a small total to an English hecatombist, but is really a large one here, and far above the average. However, scalps and noses give no key to a season's sport. The Louth hounds finished a first-class season on Thursday, the closing day having been changed from Wednesday to prevent clashing with the Meath Hunt meeting. The Carnes supplied the first fox, but she turned out a vixen (though some bloodthirsty pursuers wanted to change her sex), so the hounds were taken off, not

without much difficulty. In the act of doing so a fine-looking dog fox jumped up, ran one field, and turned back into the jaws of the pack. A third fox, found at the Mulla of Hilltown, went away well by Winter Grass, and finished a twisty crooked pursuit of thirty minutes, by New Haggard and Beaumont, in a sewer in Mount Hanover. Thomastown Bog, Rosnaree, and Kearnes Glen all failed, but Glenmore held a fox, who after some pressing broke away over Donore and Mullacrone into Platten, when he found the earths opened.

I read with some interest an account of Hungarian horses in one of your recent numbers. I owned one last year, who jumped very cleverly, galloped well, and had all the best qualities of a harness horse; being too light for my work, I sold him to a Scotch dealer, and I hear he won a small local race on landing in the Land o' Cakes. He was hardy in constitution, and a rare good doer.

The Newbridge harriers, who have prevented many a good Kildare hunter from being relegated to a premature idleness and inaction, gave last Friday the lovers of a fast thing over grass lots of scope for hard riding and jumping in a well-planned ring, from the Red House to Faircross, by Conellmore and back, several of the most popular gentleman jocks of the day taking their part in the fray.

The hunting horoscope in the Queen's County is not by any means favourable at present. *Point d'argent, point de Suisse!* and no master has yet been found sufficiently self-sacrificing to undertake to hunt this large country at a serious loss. Kilkenny and the Ormond and King's County Hunts await as patiently as they can "the coming man." If *on dits* can be credited, Westmeath has found hers, and may indeed be gratulated on the *trouvaille.*

The hunting men of Ireland, who came to the Fairy House in such numbers last Easter Monday, had a pleasant opportunity of trying their horses before turning them into summer quarters

for the next four months, for the Meath hounds were at Somerville, which is very accessible from the metropolis and its vicinity. Their first fox jumped out of Slator's Gorse, and ran very fast into Corballis, and thence towards Lismullen covert, beating the pack into a hole or burrow of some sort near the gorse. It was an extremely pretty gallop of 30 minutes, over a charming line of grass.

On Saturday, 22nd, they were at Old Castle, and found at Crossdrum, the fox ringing by Beltrasna home, and thence on towards Bobsgrove. In the afternoon there was a great deal of hunting about Annagh and Grennan, but of little reading interest.

The meet at Fore on Saturday, will close the season. Rumour says that M'Bride is about to leave Meath; but few will not echo the wish that rumour may be now, as often before, found untruthful.

Punchestown is no longer a pleasure of hope, but of memory. The Hyades and Pleiades in their courses fought against it, especially on the initial day, when we lapsed from the glories of premature summer by a most painful bathos into the rigours and discomfort of mid-winter, with occasional unpleasant experiences of sleet and hail. But, these tremendous drawbacks notwithstanding, the success of the meeting was most unequivocal. Punchestown is not only a racing assemblage, it has grown into a splendid pageant, and the viceregal *cortége*—no bad parody of Ascot,—added no little lustre and effect to its brilliancy. The ladies' stand was glorious with much of that beauty said to be the heritage and birthright of the Saxo-Celtic race, while the best types of England's bluest blood were more than adequately represented there. Fashion, brightness, and bravery lit up the benches like a summer flower show, and altogether it was a most goodly gathering in quantity and quality; for, while peers and peeresses abounded in the enclosure, the peasantry and the *polloi* were proportionately

strong outside and on the hills. If the deluging blasts of April were potent, the counterblasts of Punchestown and pleasure were omnipotent. The tide was irresistible; weather portents failed entirely to neutralise the magnetism. Economists and peace-mongers occasionally air their cynicism at the expense of the British army, asking the *cui bono* of the Curragh and Dublin garrison, the *raison d'être* of our smart cavalry, and even smarter horse artillery! Let me transplant such a Diogenes from his city tub—be the same at St. Stephen's or some Cottonopolis forum—to the undulating plains of Punchestown about two o'clock in the afternoon, when the keen eager air has sharpened appetite to voracity, and let me bring him through the stand to those tented areas at the back, where every regiment in the command delights itself in deeds of lavish and splendid hospitality. Then if the loving cups he will be forced to quaff do not inspire him with wholesome views of Her Majesty's service and the wearers of her livery, I give him up as a bad case—a reprobate, degraded, spiritless outcast like Canning's knife-grinder! This year the sumptuary edicts and ukases which forbade tents and committed the delicacies of the season to the tender mercies of storm and rain were fortunately countermanded; so, though peaches, petits pois, and relays of hot cutlets were no longer forthcoming everywhere, salmon were not floating in their native element, nor did they require clever gaffing, mayonnaises and macédoines were undiluted by rain, and, in fine, there was no longer an air of flotsam and jetsom about the pleasant mid-day repast. Having said so much about the attractive side of Punchestown, it is somewhat hard to reverse the medal and turn "dénigrant." But in point of fact the raree show and picnic element was the best part of the monster meeting. The show of horses was poor in the extreme. The military races were "grand" only in name, and the farmers sent a squalid-looking field to compete for the rich prizes offered them. The hunters who contested the

Kildare Hunt Cup seemed very creditable performers; and the running in the recent red-coat tournament in that country was proved to have been very true and very good in form. Mr. W. Blacker's win on his good and gallant grey, Snowstorm, whom I had often occasion to mention in my notices of the Kildare Hunt, was not only very popular but very meritorious, for I do not suppose that this horse was ever eased for an hour during the season in consideration of his dawning racing career. The new course, too, which these horses had to jump, was an ordeal too severe for anything but a good hunter. Sir Walter Nugent's mare Barbara won the Downshire (welter race) in very good style and extremely quick time. She was well piloted by Lord Marcus Beresford, the most succesful amateur, I think, at this meeting.

Punchestown and permanence seem just now correlative terms. Surely, then—*vue* the "uncertain glories of an April day" and the probability of a rainfall and consequent slough—the authorities might make a wide carriage drive from "The Gap" to the stand, even if it were necessary to increase the "gate money." A long shed would be a boon to horse owners and their servants. I hope the cards will continue to be printed at the local press in Naas, for they were admirably turned out.

There is another side to Punchestown which concerns the republic of hunting greatly. Hither flock the masters of Irish packs of hounds to a man, and not a few English likewise, and with them many huntsmen and whips. Of course there are also a good many ex-masters about, and masters *in posse* and *in futuro*. Thus a peripatetic hunting parliament may be said to be convened here, and in "the Rialto" opposite the stand much hunting business is ventilated, discussed, and settled. One outcome of their deliberations is most satisfactory, and of good omen to the coming season's prospects. Col. Frank Chaplin, of the 4th Dragoon Guards, has accepted the mastership of the Kilkenny hounds, vacant by Mr. Henry Briscoe's resignation of the symbolic horn of office, which he held so long, so cheerily, and so successfully.

I was wrong in saying no English horses contended for these prizes. One or two drafts from English stables, notably old Bully, did very well, after a long schooling in Ireland, in Mr. Linde's able hands.

May 6th, 1876.

A cry more tunable
Was never holla'd to in Greece, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly.

Time was, and it need not tax the memory of an old inhabitant, when the Kildare Hunt thought it part of its devoir and privilege to hunt the fox assiduously from cubbing time till St. Punchestown had come and gone—one of the glories and "draws" of this newly enrolled and calendared saint being a Kildare meet somewhere near Naas to wind up the season, and to crown the hospitalities shown to the strangers within his "pale." Masters of hounds in England looked forward with no little pleasant anticipation to this part of the meeting; masters in Ireland failed not to attend; and if their own hunters were laid up in lavender for the season, their friends in Dublin, Meath, or Kildare would and could always find them a mount. *Nous avons changé tout cela.* Punchestown has become too multitudinous to make such a welcome to the visitors possible. Perhaps the farmers grumbled at the raid on their grass lands; perhaps foxes have become scarcer. At any rate, the old order giveth way to the new, and with April's ides the chase of the fox now subsides in Kildare. Not so in Meath. Appetite for sport has there grown upon what it has fed on, and a splendid season of almost continuously good sport has only made the ranks of pursuers all the keener and more impatient of any early closing movement, if such were ever contemplated.

A May fox was usually sacrificed to Diana in Eastern Meath to propitiate her favour for the coming season. The offering has

not literally been made in the month of Maia this year, but on its very threshold; and we trust the great goddess will be satisfied with the practical fulfilment of votive foxhunters. The last meet of the pack was on the last day of April, at Fore, and, notwithstanding the strong counter-attractions of Wicklow Steeplechases, and country houses all filled for the occasion, there was a very large assemblage of what the Laureate (of his day) called "the true and genuine sort, whose heart and soul is in the sport;" among them the Hon. Harry Bourke, Messrs S. Reynell, J. Naper, Trotter, Donaldson, Roberts, Kearney, Garnetts (2), with Miss Chapman and the Miss Reynells.

Windtown Hill covert was first drawn in vain, but in the bog strong-hold a fine old dog fox soon turned up, and was as quickly ejected. His impulse seemed for Cullen's Gorse, but he did not enter it, but kept it on his right, passing through Gillardstown and Barbavilla, the wind right in his teeth, and scent most serving accordingly. This naturally made him sink the strong breeze and turn to the right hand towards Kanturk, a covert which, however, he failed to reach, and was run into in the open after a capital 48 minutes, of which the initial twenty-two were at express pace. The country rode very fairly light after the recent drying processes, which will account for two welter-weights having led their field all through—I refer to the Hon. H. Bourke and Mr. Trotter. The scene of the death, and indeed a great part of the chace, was in Westmeath—a fact which those who have followed the names in my weekly notes will not fail to recognise. The next draw was Anna, which produced an embarrassing plethora of foxhood—a pleasing sight at the end of such a season to the master and the great co-operative foxhunting corporation of Meath, whose unanimity, heartiness, and toil co-operant to its end —sport—has worked such glorious results. I hear Goodall, Lord Middleton's first whip, succeeds Macbride.

May 20th, 1876.

After a number of meetings, palavers and protocols, the Queen's County hounds have passed into the management and presidency of Captain Hamilton Stubber (late Royals), whose father held the horn of office for some time a generation ago.

This is a subject of congratulation to many hunting men, not only in his native county (the Queen's), but in the border lands of Kilkenny, Kildare, and the King's County; for all Captain H. Stubber's antecedents warrant the almost foregone conclusion, that what he undertakes he will do well and efficiently; and though it is no easy task to succeed such a master as Captain Cosby has proved, there is not much fear of the Queen's County hounds losing their well-known prestige and character in his hands.

I believe Snaith will still remain huntsman, nor have I heard of any changes proposed in the staff, though Tom McAllister's vacancy has not yet been filled up. Captain Stubber has been a very Zingari sportsman hitherto; turning up now in Kildare, now in Kilkenny, anon in Waterford, always well-mounted on capable weight carriers, who not unfrequently win welter races in the close season. He will now confine his wanderings perforce to his own territory, whose very wide limits will find him ample occupation, and plenty of exercise.

The kennels at Moyne will be still very wide of the centre of the county; but for the matter of that, so too were the Stradbally kennels. In "Younger Son," "Waverley" (who won the fox-hunting plate at Baldoyle, yesterday, in rare style), "Rasper," and others of similar pretensions, Captain Stubber has the nucleus of a very fine stud.

HORSEDOM IN IRELAND.

[*A reprint from 'The World.'*]

THE age is an age of panics and 'scares;' and hardly does one session of Parliament dissolve its components into Macgregors on their native heaths, Alpine adventurers, hardy Norsemen, fishermen, gunners, yachtsmen, farmers, tourists, artists, or bookmakers, when the nation suddenly awakens to a sense of its perilous condition in respect to some entity of primary importance to life and wellbeing. Coal and iron have been the most recent of the breakers on which the good ship Rule Britannia was about to founder; while the army, the navy, the bar, the church, the Stock-Exchange, the inspectors of our drains and sewers, have one after another been weighed in the balances of the sanctuary by the purists, pessimists, and alarmists of the day, and declared emphatically to be one and all failures, and false to their purposes and standards. Take the army, for instance; it is the old story of the Danaides. The sieve is filled by recruiting, and emptied as fast by desertion.

"Ireland, sir-r! don't talk of Ireland. Ireland is rich, Ireland is Fenian at heart, and won't play at soldiering for England's behoof any more. So much for infantry and artillery. As for cavalry, she is giving up horse-breeding; shorthorns pay better; statistics tell you that in the last decade horses have diminished there by sixty-two thousand and odd. Prussia, France, and Austria have picked up her best and stoutest mares. Go to the fairs—Banagher, Ballinasloe, Mullingar, Cahirmee, Cork, etc.—and mark the visible and acknowledged decay in numbers and quality, and then tell me how you are to furnish mounts and remounts in the not improbable contingency of a European war. Why, if, as Lord Coventry pointed out in his letter to the *Times*, such a small "one-horse" operation as the Autumn Manœuvres could not be carried out without the aid of foreign horses to the extent

of two-thirds of the total number, how could any sudden emergency be met? Believe me, sir-r, the dragoon will soon relapse per force into the condition for which he was originally intended, and to which the defining dictionaries of an early period relegate him: 'a soldier who fights indifferently on foot and horseback.' "

Now we will not attempt to controvert our alarmist's facts; the tedious incubation of a horsey committee is warrant enough that there is 'something in it;' nor will we dispute the seriousness of the position if there were grounds for fearing that Ireland, our horse farm as well as our beef and mutton farm, had lost any of her natural capabilities for rearing and confectioning man's noblest conquest (*vide* Buffon), the horse, who, though not perhaps of such primary necessity as either coal, iron, or even beef and mutton, takes the very highest place in the category of *le superflu ci nécessaire.*

Moses, in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, when arguing with the doctor who gave him a case of shagreen spectacles for the family prad, demanded certain postulates before he took off the metaphorical coat; and so, before we enter on the question, we will assume that the principles of free trade are now axiomatic and of universal acknowledgment; and we will further stipulate, as conceded, that not even Jack Horner, clever lad that he was, could eat his cake and have it too. "Salve, magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus, magna virum," says the poet of Mantua, apostrophising his dear native land; and an Irish Virgil might re-echo the strain, substituting 'horses' for the 'fruges,' for of men and horses to serve England's war necessities Ireland has been ever most prodigal. But pestilence and famine, aided by emigration, and the obvious advantage of consolidating holdings and turning moderate arable into superior pasture lands, have certainly curtailed the recruiting sergeants' preserves, while high wages, travel, education, and cosmopolitanism have closed the portals of youthful ears to their silvery blandishments. The same causes, or some of them, have likewise limited the questing grounds of

dealers in search of troopers; and though Government has considerably raised the purchasing price, the mine no longer yields the golden returns of old. When Ireland was subdivided into a multitude of small farms of mixed arable and pasture, every rood of land maintained not only its man but its pig and its mare. The latter had a yearly foal, with probably more breeding than feeding about it, more pedigree than performance; but worked in a light plough and harrow before it had attained the mature age of twenty-four months, and accustomed to scamper on holidays over doubles and ditches very promiscuously, the imagination will easily realise what a vast number of three-year-olds, with capacity for development in them, flooded the neighbouring fairs. Before the railway system was developed *there* was a mine for dealers and agents to exploiter, and they *did* work it with a will. Of course as small farms passed into the hands of capitalists this Arab system (which may also be seen at full work in Jamaica) of unsystematic horse-raising gradually fell into disuetude. Clydesdales and Suffolks were found better adapted to heavy farm and wagon work: but in point of fact the number of horses for agricultural purposes that formerly obtained was no longer necessary; though as railways ramified through the land, and the wealth of both England and Ireland increased, provident farmers of means saw their advantage in utilising the best of these mares, and feeding them and their offspring more liberally. A good marketable article in these days does not go long a-begging, and the consequence was that in a few years Ireland became the great horse mart for Europe. The material was there, and it was now directly accessible by means of steam power. The stock had been tested and approved of.

This style of horse culture—by rule of thumb and without any regard to natural selection or natural aptitudes, mating mares to the nearest and cheapest sires in the neighbourhood—produced, as might be imagined, a most heterogeneous array of colthood, three-cornered for the most part, and shapeless, but all distin-

guished by a certain dash of the "air noble," which Pat desiderates as much in his horse as in his wife and child. Naturally, marriage being a lottery among horses as among humans, a certain number of happy accidents, throwing back for their good looks and action to their remote maternal or paternal ancestors, were yearly produced, and for these dealers from many a capital, insular as well as continental, higgled and wrangled at Mullingar, Ballinasloe, and the other great fairs, the foreigners affecting the sex of the less certain temperament if enticed thereto by substance, action, and good whole colour. Thus year by year the bravest and best were gradually drained away, and as very few ever thought of investing part of their proceeds in the purchase of likely brood mares of new strains, hence arose a certain deterioration in quality; and a further circumstance aided this. Ireland, with Hungary, produced small hardy horses, not up to much weight. But animals of welter capacity were required for the dealer, and not a few of the farmers saw their advantage in mixing a dash of the Clydesdale to give size and temper. The result was a soft bad brute, good for the seller, just the reverse for the user. So much for the quality.

The decline in numbers may be traced partly to the consolidation of holdings, but far more to the immense stimulus which has been given to beef and mutton culture, for which the market is less precarious, and in which, if the prizes are somewhat less ambitious, they are not devoid of splendour. Few two-year-olds have ever commanded the price of a roan calf (2000 guineas), recently sold at Mr. Leney's sale. Few stud sales have ever made the averages of Lord Bective's and the Duke of Devonshire's pedigree cattle; and though Ireland has not advanced quite so far in the golden-calf worship as her richer sister, she does not lag far behind. The breeding of shorthorns and muttons has advanced on intelligent and scientific principles. Horse culture has been left very much to nature and neighbourhood, and the result is not to be marvelled at.

But have not, it will be asked, certain companies been formed to promote horse-breeding in Ireland! Yes; and they have proved conspicuous failures; and it is now generally admitted that their breakdown was owing to the national vice of breeding from any sort of mare, and hoping that the confessed natural advantages of soil and climate would countervail inferiority in maternal capacity. The comparatively recent break-up of the Palmerston Stud Company was perhaps the most pregnant instance and illustration of this proposition.

I have before compared the Irish to the Hungarian horse, a light wiry animal *malo assuetus*, like the Ligurian, and capable of far more than his appearance would warrant. Indeed, the parallel will go farther, for the furious driving of Viennese and Pesth Jehus is not dissimilar to that of the Pats and Micks going we will say, to a Baldoyle, or a Fairyhouse, or a Punchestown *réunion*. But there is very little of the old native element, education, or rearing in the spice-fed, daintily-reared, sleek-coated animals which English and Scotch dealers buy in such numbers at the annual Dublin horse-show as hunters, much as the wine-copers ostentatiously buy a few dozen of old port and Madeira to advertise their cellars, and to flavour them too; for the rage for Irish hunters is not yet abated. The dealers, like all caterers to fashion, must turn it to profitable account. This great annual horse-show, held in the premises and under the auspices of the Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland, whose only complaint is that they cannot find space sufficient for the wishes of competitors from all part of the island, is the last outcome of horse-dealing in Ireland, and perhaps, all things considered, 'the biggest thing' of the sort extant; for in addition to the six hundred and odd (a number equal to the heroic Light Brigade at Balaclava) horses of all classes which pass under the judges' eyes, sometimes there are probably an equal number awaiting the Saxon and foreign purchaser in the various stables and repositories in Dublin and its vicinage. As this show is frequented by agriculturists from all

parts of the island, there can be little doubt that it must have the effect of raising among the natives the standard of a marketable horse, and increasing their experience of show-yard condition; for dealers will not purchase lean and hungry Cassios, be their symmetry and points never so good. The existence and increasing importance of this annual show is quite enough to account for the decline of such great horse-marts as Ballinasloe, and to foreign purchasers it is an unmitigated blessing, and the saving in time and risk and outlay may be roughly set down as equal to twenty per cent. But whether the animals reared and pampered for this exhibition will sustain the wear and tear, cut-and-come-again character which was the birthright of the Irish horse, remains to be proven.

A few words now about the foundations on which the fame of Ireland's horses has been built up throughout generations. That a very hardy race of 'hobbies' existed in the country long ago we know from Giraldus Cambrensis. The English knights of the Pale, whose pastime was the *manêge* of the great horse, probably increased the size of the breed at the expense of other qualities. Then came the era of *pur sang*, and that Ireland was not a laggard in the race, such animals as Faugh-a-ballagh, the Baron, St. Lawrence, Harkaway, Corunna, Croagh Patrick, Barbarian, Russboro, with many others, attest. But in thoroughbreds Ireland has hardly attained the same level as France, or, numbers considered, as Germany or America; in steeplechasers and hunters she has certainly taken the highest honours, though at the same time it may be doubted whether such an English representative horse as the Colonel has ever been excelled by any of the Irish division, though if the last champion, Clonave, improves as he promises to do, the balance may again lean towards the Shamrock side.

Nor is the solution far to seek, in the opinion of many. The sporting genius of Ireland loves lepping and lep-races, as the frieze-coated *terræ filii* call 'chases' in their vernacular. Hence,

while the fine stand at the Curragh is a beggarly array of empty benches, a lep-race in heats at Ballyporeen will attract its thousands, Punchestown its tens of thousands. I should be sorry to say that the average English hunter was inferior to his Irish cousin in pace, quality, action, or capacity; probably he is his superior in all save in the enormous advantage which early education over an endless variety of straggling ill-made fences regular only in their irregularity, gave the latter—a superiority known in the horse world as cleverness—and it is this peculiarity which in Irish horses has so often beaten more fashionable pedigree and more imposing symmetry. Men make horses, and men and nature have hitherto gone hand in hand to make the Irish hunter and chaser.

Let us now state the conclusion we have come to on the whole matter, as time and space forbid our enlarging farther, or bringing statistics to bear. Horses *have* diminished in Ireland in numbers; nor has, we fear, their average quality improved sensibly. Shorthorns and sheep have had a good innings, but there is nothing to cause alarm in the horse prospects of Ireland. The same magnificent pastures, with their substratum of limestone, and endless rills and fountains of perennial water; the same even climate and moderate winters, will supply us with legions of useful colts when the market shows their need. In hay and oats and straw Ireland has improved vastly of late years, and now that her deficiency in brood mares of the proper sort is confessed, the first step towards improvement has been taken.

KILDARE RED-COAT RACE.

[*A Reprint from 'Baily's Monthly Magazine.'*]

'Septimi Gades aditure mecum.'

No, my Septimius! let us not steer to the pillars of Hercules. Let us rather, obedient to the refrain of the charming *prima donna* of the drawing-room, whom we all listened to with such silent rapture last night as she warbled,

'O steer my bark to Erin's isle,
For Erin is my home.'

And, having made the port of Kingstown, let us intrust ourselves to that patent safety coach of tortoise speed and tortoise sureness the Great Southern and Western Railway, and take our tickets for Straffan Station, first telegraphing for "an outsider" (it may fortune to prove "outsiders any price," in the jargon of the ring); for our destination, Septimius, is yon green hill, some two or three miles distant, which dominates the park of Bishopscourt, and is itself more or less overshadowed by the wooded heights of Lord Cloncurry's fine pleasaunce of Lyons. See, as we leave the station, how the commanding knoll is becoming peopled with bright bits of colour. In a few minutes more it will be animated as an ant-hill in effervescence and commotion, while already a dark back ground is formed by drags, coaches, and carriages of all sorts, kinds, and complexions. While we ourselves are gradually getting into a sort of queue of the cars and croydons of the period, we have ample leisure to mark the traces of the recent heavy snow-fall on the summits and rifted sides of the Dublin and Wicklow range. Our Jehu—who is hardly up to the standard of the *stage* car-driver (no pun is intended), but a pleasant man enough, if more reticent of speech than many of his countrymen, "softened" or "un-

softened" by that great Home-ruler and heart-stirrer John Jamieson—has informed us that at an early hour yesterday snow was falling thick and fast till succeeded, in the afternoon, by copious rain, while the surface water on the field of this very morning was coated over with thin ice scales. Fortunately, an unclouded and unchequered sun had by one o'clock removed every vestige of Jack Frost's malignities; and if an undertone of chilliness pervaded the whole atmosphere, and made sealskins and sables, Ulsters and undervests near and dear friends not to be lightly parted with or cast off, "What a glorious day!" was the usual and common commentary of exchange on the influences of air, earth, and sky on the large gallery of spectators, who had been, apparently, conveyed from every point of the compass to the northern slopes of Oughterard Hill to witness the last scene of the Kildare hunting drama—enacted, of course, with appropriate costume and all suitable accessories. Ascending slowly the hill-slope by an easy gradient, a number of led horses pass us, but their *entourage*, and the fashion of their sadlery and clothing, at once assure us that one and all come straight from hunting and not racing stables, though they have one and all the stamp of unmistakable good-breeding and Eastern lineage about them. The attendant lads, too, are no types of either Newmarket, Yorkshire, or even Melton. They are Kildare outwardly and inwardly; they believe in their stable representative; and, with owners or a "right" man up, it will go hard with them if the ring don't win or lose the best part of a month's wages from them on the impending event.

Arrived at the inevitable gate, and its toll settled, let us saunter about, Septimius, and survey mankind and womankind from base to summit, on foot and horseback, lounging in landaus, or "throwing of great leps" as they take preliminaries on foot over the likeliest and most sensational bits of the tournament arena. The upper gallery is, for the nonce, the grand tier, and has been occupied in force considerable by the lords of the soil,

the autochthons, and those whom Kildare attracts to her borders from many a distant county and shire. Carton has sent thither the younger members of her most ducal family—the Fitzgeralds—who, from this little eyrie, survey a vale of which almost every acre is strewn with some tradition of their ancestral doings. The Marchioness of Drogheda has imported to Ireland all her county and kinsfolks' zeal and devotion for field sports, and most especially for hippic games. Lord Clonmell's marquee on a corner of the hillside is very conspicuous among the darker carriages; and be sure, whether his Lordship returns a victor or a vanquished jouster from the fray, his pleasant welcome and cordial insistence, not to speak of an unmistakable *menu*, will make said tent a most tremendous attraction to all that is bright and jolly, as well as hungry and thirsty, in an hour or two. Mr. Forbes's dark-blue omnibus (his racing colours), and the coach of the 4th Dragoon Guards, may seem a representation of the imported elements. They are well freighted, and in another hour or two will be turned into hospices for the refreshment of wayworn pilgrims in this green wilderness. A fair expanse meets the eye as it ranges from the attractions near and around to survey the more distant prospect. It is the great Liffey valley which, after a rapid and hurried rush from the Wicklow hills, now flows stately and sinuous through that flat grass prairie which lies between the two trunk lines of Ireland's railway system. Immediately under us is the tilting ground, if we may borrow the chivalrous nomenclature; and as it is treeless and hedgerowless, every object on its superficies is very perceptible to field-glass or keen eye from our coign of vantage. A straight silver streak running from west to east forms its northern boundary; this is the Grand Canal, and the course consists of an elongated oval, of which rather more than a mile will be parallel to this waterway. It is clothed in Ireland's green livery, though 'tis a seedy grassy livery, and not the rich emerald hue in which the island is generally pranked after a course of April's genial showers, but wearing rather the blighted aspect

caused by weeks of easterly and northerly blasts. One, and only one, little bit of umber testifies to the rare existence of tillage in these pastoral lands, and this the contending knights will have to cross before they enter the winning field. But one o'clock has struck, and scarlet-coated figures are moving about under the hill, and gradually a considerable ring is collected round a tall, commanding figure, who, with pencil in hand and an assistant handy, is organising preliminary matters. This is the Marquis of Drogheda, who, whether at Punchestown or the Curragh, always takes the lion's share of hard work and head work, most fortunately for the community among whom he lives, moves, and has his being. His assistant is Mr. W. S. Gray, a well-known figure at racecourses, and between them they are weighing out the eighteen riders who are coloured on the card of the day. Familiarity with racing scenes and details has made the typical confusion and search for whips, saddles, leads, and suchlike less conspicuous here than in most similar tableaux where the unprofessional element is supreme. But who is this in racing costume as to his lower man, with a brown billicock-hat and voluminous red coat on the upper deck, and that look of pace and go about him which speaks of a wider experience than the hunting field affords? This is Captain Greville Nugent, *ci-devant* Master of the Westmeath Hounds and M.P. for the same county. He has latterly devoted himself more to his chasing constituents than any other interests, and his presence on the scene is the signal for an explosion which is a most unmistakable, if disguised, compliment to the gallant Captain's powers. A large section of the riders protest against his riding —as if even George Fordham could turn a slow hunter into an Eclipse by the magic of his hand and heel! But the protest is useless, for the Captain is a Member of the Hunt; and the Protestant spirit finds its object in Mr. O'Connor Morris, who, though specially invited to enter his hunters, is not (*pour cause*) a member of this or any other hunt in Ireland. Technicality and the terror of the little Captain prevail, and Lord Drogheda announces

that Mr. Morris's pair are disqualified. However, a ride is a ride, and they accompany the red cohort, who, piloted by that veteran sportsman and famous welter-weight, Captain Warburton, proceed to the starting-point, some quarter of a mile distant. Very little time is cut into at the post; no false starts; no fines or reprimands; all the horses were well in hand, and there was none of the fractiousness of a sprinting scurry. The flag fell to a capital start, and in a few seconds the purple-clad mass had divided like a fan, as each rider spotted a place for himself in the initial obstacle—a wide ditch, prefaced in a few spots by a low post and rail, in others by a margin of thorn. The course was a left-handed one throughout; but after the first fence, which all crossed successfully, a rather sharp turn had to be made, which told its tale on raking, unhandy horses. Nothing new occurs to stop progress till a fine rampart-like double, with a top on which a large party might picnic, bars the way, and tests the schooling of the running horses not a little. One or two refuse point-blank; a third shies at the marking flag, which flutters in the air with much resonance. Westown, Lord Clonmell's most hunting-like mount, overjumps himself with vaulting ambition, and falls on the other side, his Lordship most narrowly escaping a mud bath. By this time the eighteen horses have most distinct positions in the line of march. General Seymour, who is riding his A. D. C.'s hunter, Simon, makes the pace very severe—considering that he is on a good stout hunter, 'tis true, but with fourteen stone in the saddle and a few thoroughbreds behind him—and with him are Mr. Morris's Satanella, Mr. Maher's Spring Flower, Captain Lawless's Ecossais, his own St. Patrick, and Captain Schawbe's Emperor, the latter apparently outpaced already. A very small bit of light plough, a bank and ditch, and the irregular line is galloping at top speed over the large field overlooked by the spectacular hill I have alluded to, without any great change in the position of affairs, except that Lord Cloncurry, on Handicap, has crept up a little bit. Out of this bit of galloping ground, the

first barrier is a single, with a newly cut-down bank and much loose clay about its edge; some grief ensues here: then follow a few easy hunting fences, and the line is now parallel to the Grand Canal—the best of going, but barred by two wide ditches and menacing banks, one very irregular, which cause some refusings among good hunters who never decline anything in season if the pace were only sustained to hunting measure, which it certainly is not, so they now make or *forge* their own checks; and at this point a number of both light and heavy-weights are disposed of, and make homeward tracks or short cuts. A road next intervenes, and two single fences have to be jumped in and out, which further weed the reduced red troop; and here four horses form a little *parti carré* quite to themselves: these are Satanella, St. Patrick, Sweet Pea, with Ecossais and the Hon. E. Lawless not far behind. Satanella has been pulling very hard all the way, and has a good lead at the double, where she overjumps herself and falls heavily on the off-side, girths, etc., smashing in the fall. The race is now a duel between the light-weights, Sweet Pea and St. Patrick, and as the latter hit his leg at the last fence, and thus disposed of his prospects, Sweet Pea comes in a winner absolute. Ecossais has beaten all the fourteen-stone class easily, his nearest neighbour being Captain Lee's Simon, admirably ridden by General Seymour. That the pace was a very strong one is evidenced by the enormous discrepancy of distance between the winner and the last of the valiant strugglers who rode the line—still more strongly by the unanimity of watches, which made the time twelve or twelve and a half minutes. Supposing the distance to have been four miles, as intended, this would be extremely and improbably fast; but probably the limit of three miles was not much exceeded, and even this would make the time very fair indeed. The choice of the ground was simply admirable, for riders, horses, and spectators, as almost every fence was perceptible; and if in one or two places the fences recurred rather too quickly for chasing form, for a hunting test they could

not have been more happily placed. Hitherto these laurel crowns (not unguilt) have fallen mainly to visitors, such as Mr. Forbes, Mr. Bushe, and Mr. O'C. Morris. This year, by a happy and not undeserved coincidence, they fell to the two men who may be considered as representative Kildare men in the light and heavy division—Mr. Fortescue Tynte and the Hon. E. Lawless. Needless to say that both wins were intensely popular.

The Greville-phobia was hardly consistent with what was imagined to be Kildare form, and led to some amusing eccentricities.

In the Farmers' Race, which followed, no less than thirteen came to the post; but three had it much to themselves, all securing prizes, and the third horse showed considerable stamina by winning a Consolation Stake directly afterwards—a hunting-like grey, having Cruisk for sire, and The Last of the Barons for grandsire.

Septimius, Kildare must be a most enjoyable county, and hunting a grand institution, when its last page is so bright in incident!"

THE KILDARE RED-COAT RACE, a Sweepstakes of £3 3*s.*; about 4 miles. Heavy-weight, 14 st. and upwards.

Hon. E. Lawless's b. g. Ecossais, aged	Owner (1).
Capt. Lee's b. g. Simon, by Kinnaird, 6 years	Gen. Seymour (2).
Lord Cloncurry's Handicap, aged	Owner.
Capt. Tuthill's b. g. Hussar, aged	Mr. Blacker.
The Earl of Clonmell's b. g. Westown	Owner.
Mr. E. Mansfield's ch. g. Forester, by Woodman, 6 years	Owner.
Capt. R. Mansfield's b. g. Rushlight, aged	Owner.
Mr. Forbes's b. g. The Gunner, by Artillery, aged	Owner.

Mr. Maher's br. g. Tom King, by Solon, carried 14st. 2 lbs. . . . . Mr. Williams.
Mr. M. O'C. Morris's b. g. Charles Lamb, by Prince Arthur, aged, carried 14 st. 6 lbs. . . . . Owner.

Light-weights, 12st and upwards.

Mr. F. Tynte's ch. m. Sweet Pea, by Chit Chat, d. by Bashful, aged . . Owner (1).
Gen. Seymour's gr. h. St. Patrick, 5 years Mr. Gage (2).
Capt. Schawbe's ch. g. Emperor, 6 years Mr. P. Latouche (3).
Commander Forde's Amphitrite . . Mr. Keville Davies.
Capt. Loyd's b. g. Alured, aged . . . Owner.
Mr. O'C. Morris's b. m. Satanella, aged . Hon. Greville Nugent.
Mr. Maher's br. g. Spring Flower, 6 years Capt. Bates.
Mr. Mahoney's ch. g. Victor, aged . . Owner.

VIATICA.

HOTELS and inns form important links in the hunting chain, and the peripatetic pursuer could no more enjoy his kingly pastime without their aid, than the tourist, prospector, or sportsman in the prairies of the West could dispense with the oft-recurring friendly ranche for a base of operations or harbour of refuge.

A system of thoroughly comfortable country inns is an outcome of high civilisation, fostered by accumulated wealth and peaceful progress. Such a system has not established itself yet in Ireland, though shebeenism has become obsolete, and a better order of travellers' homes is fast springing up. The cynic who wrote the well-known quatrain about his warmest welcome being often found in an inn, was not an Irishman in his notions and habits, if an Irishman by birth. A generation or two ago the lavish hospitality of the Irish squirearchy made hotel-keeping in the county districts nugatory, and as in Australia and Jamaica the strangers within the gate formed an item in the annual housekeeping.

The memorable famine, coincident with the spread of railways, swept away the ancient social system with its exaggerated vices and virtues. Hotels are springing up rapidly to meet new wants and requirements. Possibly in a few years a second Major Whyte Melville (if a second is destined to arise) may give an Irish edition of 'Within the Bar.' The materials for such sketches hardly exist at present. The following hints may prove of service to hunting men who wish to cross the channel to see new phases of fox and stag hunting.

The physical configuration of the island has limited the Irish hunting area to some half-a-dozen districts or so (to speak inexactly), where bog and mountain are comparatively unknown.

The capitals of these districts are Drogheda, Dublin, Kilkenny, Mallow, Cork, Enniscorthy, Mullingar, and Galway; and of the eight we have enumerated, three single themselves out by the superior attractions they present to the nomadic Nimrod, namely, Dublin, Kilkenny, and Mallow.

It is no figure of speech to say that Dublin commands within hacking distance some of the finest hunting grounds in the world known to us moderns; and sitting, as this glorious capital does, *à cheval* of the railway arteries, which lead directly or indirectly to all the provincial packs, she offers a programme of hunting more varied in its attractions than any capital within my experience, while some half-dozen first-class hotels, such as the Bilton and the Gresham, on the northern banks of the Liffey; Morrison's, Maple's, and the Shelbourne, on the southern, and two or three good clubs not inaccessible to strangers and visitors, make life by no means intolerable even to the sybarite and fastidious. The tri-weekly fixtures of the Ward Union hounds, so much affected by the civil, military, professional, and commercial pursuers, are within easy posting limits; and those who are extra tenderly disposed towards their hunters may send on over night or early in the morning to such villages as Ashbourne, Dunboyne, and Ratoath, where hunters will be well done, better perhaps than their grooms. The Meath and Kildare hounds may always be commanded twice or thrice a week from Dublin; for the former, the villages I have just named will be found most effective, for the latter *Kilcock*, *Blackchurch*, and *Celbridge* will be very useful, and the "groom in waiting" will have no difficulty in gaining good boxes and good keep in all.

Besides the packs I have named, Mr. George Brook's, Mr. Maxwell's, and the Bray harriers are often within afternoon distance of the metropolis, and so are a well-known pack of drag hounds.

In addition to the recommendations of Ireland's capital as a base for hunting operations may be added the fact that, as Lon-

don is decidedly the hub of the horse world (for hacking and harness purposes), so is Dublin *facile princeps* as a mart for hunters; and if such hunter merchants and factors as Messrs. McGrane, Daly, Murphy, Gavacan, and Co., fail to provide you with good capable performers, be sure the fault lies either in your own nerve, pocket, judgment, or taste.

The northernmost pack of fox hounds in Ireland are the Louth, who are bounded on the east by the Channel and Irish sea, on the west by Meath. Drogheda would be the best capital for this pack, and men and horses can be made fairly comfortable in this ancient city, specially at the White Horse Hotel. Dundalk has the further recommendation of being the head-quarters of a cavalry regiment, who have generally a private pack of harriers. Hotels do not abound in this county, though good rough stabling can be had at such places as Collon, Oldbridge, etc.

Travelling towards the noonday sun, and a few points to the westward, we come to Meath, the hunting county *par excellence* of Ireland, whether the number of hunting days per week (6) or the extent of pasture land within its area be the supreme test. Navan is its natural hunting centre and the nearest town to the kennels. The club which once flourished here has fallen under a temporary eclipse; but at the Russell Arms there is accommodation for some 20 hunters and a limited number of owners. Mrs. Kelly and Mrs. McHugh have also good stabling, and horses are also welcomed at Lumley's and Moran's Hotels.

At *Trim* there is fair stabling at Darling's Hotel; at Drumcree some half-dozen horses can be put up at Mr. Fox's; at Kells, Lowry's Hotel is a good billet for man or beast; at Athboy, Mrs. McElroy's Hotel will be found very useful. Dunboyne abounds in stabling, and at Ratoath, McIntyre can put up some 20 hunters and gives them his personal superintendence if left in *his charge*. At Old Castle I hear the inn is good.

The Kildare hounds meet the public seven days a fortnight, a number which their M. F. H. occasionally increases. Naas is the

county town and the natural hunting centre, being close to the kennels. Stabling abounds in Naas, and good lodgings are procurable; but, from local and temporary causes, the hotel accommodation is rather limited. Good boxes may be had at Coffey's in Sallins, at the Mayo Arms in Johnstown, at Celbridge, Maynooth, Kilcock, Newbridge, Athy, the Grange, Blessington, and Dunlavin, while the latter thriving town rejoices in a very well-kept hotel known as the Tynte Arms.

The capital of western Meath is Mullingar, a very prosperous place, strongly garrisoned, well provisioned, with a good hotel, the Greville Arms, where Mrs. Carroll, the landlady, will make the pursuer thoroughly comfortable. The enterprise of Mr. Cummings has erected stabling for a large number of hunters, while Mr. Fulton, V. S., has also some very good roomy boxes to let. The chief out-stations, so to speak, of this hunt, are Moate, where there is Harford's Inn, and Athlone with its two hotels.

At *Killucan* Mr. Moore is said to be a very good host, while the hotel at Delvin is owned by the same proprietor. Pursuing our route westwards we come to the Galway territory, whose limits, roughly speaking, are the Shannon and the Atlantic. Galway, the City of the Tribes, is full of good hotels and comfortable horse boxes, but for hunting purposes it is very wide of all the best country which is commanded by Athenry, a railway junction rejoicing in a railway hotel, which, under Mr. Kavanagh's management, has proved most popular among hunting men. Tuam, Portumna, Loughrea, and Ballinasloe have moderate hotel accommodation for man and horse. The Midland Railway, which traverses Galway, is most liberal to hunting men, taking horses to and from stations at single fares and allowing a delay of three days.

Roscommon's magnificent plains are hunted by a pack of stag hounds, but of the hostelries there I cannot speak with the confidence of personal acquaintance or reliable information. Sligo, Mayo, and Leitrim boast only harriers. Branching off

from the Midland line at, say, Athlone, we are soon taken on to Maryborough, the capital of the Queen's County, which has not been much affected by hunting men for permanent quarters for selves or hunters, though hotels exist and so do fair stables, notably Gaze's. At Stradbally village there is a very fair inn and good boxes for hunters or race horses (McLoughlen's), while at Abbeyleix Mr. Morrisey will make men and horses very comfortable.

The capital of the neighbouring county (the King's) is Birr or Parsonstown, where Mr. Dooley, of the 'King's Royal Arms,' has made many hunting men welcome, and done their horses extremely well. From this town the Galway hounds may be visited on one side of their county, while it is the natural head-quarters for the King's Co. Hunt, presided over by the Earl of Huntingdon, from Sharavogue Castle, not far off; it is also handy for the 'Ormond Hunt,' recently under Lord Huntingdon's sway, but now ruled by a Committee of which I believe Mr. Trench is the acting and representative man. Clough-Jordan village in this county owns a capital inn, where Mr. and Mrs. Williams understand how to minister to travelling men and horses. Nenagh, in Tipperary, is also available for this hunt and surrounded by a fine grass country.

While in this neighbourhood we may state that those anxious to see Sir David Roche's splendid pack of hounds at work in their very varied country will find capital stabling at Croom and Rathkeale. The Clare hounds are not much known to strangers. Ennis would be the best head-quarters for a visitor. There is a fair club there. Harking back to Kildare Junction, a branch line brings us presently to Carlow's fair city on the Barrow. It is a good hunting quarter. The Club House Hotel there is very comfortable, while New-Town-Barry, Tullow, and Bagnalstown afford very fair quarters for men and hunters, though not in unlimited numbers.

The historic town of Kilkenny is the next stopping place on

our imaginary tour, and no hunting visitor to Ireland should leave the island without paying it a visit. The Club House Hotel, kept by Mr. Simon Morris, is equal to its old traditions, and very comfortable for hunting men and horses. Admirable stabling can also be had at Miss Prendergast's, close by. The Imperial Hotel (Hanlon's) is also very good, though I do not think it has boxes attached to it. Kilkenny commands its own county pack; the Curraghmore hounds and the Tipperary likewise, while the Carlow and Island are also accessible. Fair stabling can be procured in the neighbourhood of most meets of the packs I have alluded to.

Fethard is perhaps the most central place for sending horses for the Tipperary meets, and at Stoke's Hotel I hear the accommodation is fair; but the consensus of all hunting men is in favour of Mrs. Phelan's hostelry at Carrick-on-Suir, from which base the Curraghmore Kilkenny, and Tipperary, packs may be visited in much comfort.

Enniscorthy is the most central town for hunting with the Wexford hounds, and near the kennels. Cork, the southern capital of Ireland, abounds in such institutions as good clubs, and first-class hotels; as a hunting centre it is, however, undesirable. Mallow is infinitely better, commanding as it does the Duhallow and Lord Doneraile's packs, offering to the visitor good hotel accommodation, and the resources of a club with the great advantage of proximity to the kennels of the Duhallow Hunt.

At Doneraile a visitor will find good stabling, good lodgings, and good cooking. For the United Hunt, Middleton offers capital quarters for men and horses, and very central. I believe I am correct in stating that an introduction to the Honorary Secretary of the hunt, Mr. S. P. Coppinger, is a passport to the club there, where there are bedrooms available, and two or three loose boxes besides stalls. Of Mr. Godfrey Baldwin's country and its resources I cannot speak with any knowledge. And I am

not certain what capital is most available for visiting the Muskerry pack, but I think Macroom is the likeliest. Belfast, the capital of Ulster, has an admirable club, and first-class hotels. But the yarns spun in this busy emporium are not fox-hunting yarns. The Killultagh harriers, however, show good sport over a fine wild mixed country.

This *resumé* of hunting facilities in Ireland does not profess to be by any means exhaustive or even complete. As a *carte de pays*, it is hoped that it will prove serviceable to the pursuer as yet "unentered" to Irish hunting grounds.

THE END.

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